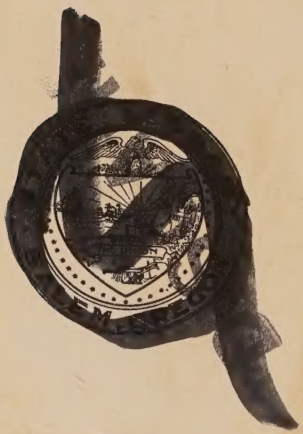
THE LATEST THING
And Other Things

ALEXANDER BLACK



Books by

ALEXANDER BLACK

The Great Desire
The Seventh Angel
Modern Daughters
Miss Jerry
Richard Gordon
A Capital Courtship
The Girl and the Guardsman
Miss America
The Story of Ohio
Thorney

THE LATEST THING
AND OTHER THINGS

By ALEXANDER BLACK

Author of "The Great Desire" "The Seventh Angel" Etc.

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THE LATEST THING

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Leisurely essays, some of which have appeared in magazines. They maintain a fairly high level of literary merit though none are particularly striking.

Partial contents: The dictatorship of the dull—Looking literary—The truth about women—Foreigners—Coincidences—Mixing.

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TO

SARAH MacCRAE BLACK

IN using the subtitle, "and other things," it will be plain that I have avoided characterizing the elements of this volume. The truth is that even essays might seem to have become class conscious; and beyond all that—well, we are living in the midst of bewildering subtleties of classification. One comes to suspect that while much has been said (for example) in favor of naming sins pleasantly, it is shrewder to shirk labels where the thing can be done in a decent way. Many a virtue has landed in jail for the misdemeanor of a misnomer.

I mention such a matter here because this is the place for the confession of dutiable luggage, and because the mellow practice of a preliminary gesture, as in opening an after-dinner speech, even if foolish in itself, should not, perhaps, be permitted to die out. Unless the prefatory franchise is maintained by running an occasional car over the tracks, some writer who really needed the privilege, for any high or peculiar purpose, might be sorely embarrassed.

Also, it will not be inappropriate to mention that certain of these casuals have met audiences in the "Atlantic," the "Century," "Harper's," the "Bookman" and elsewhere. Certain others, in the spot light of this print, now have a presumptuously personal, sometimes even rather an unkempt look, as not yet having dressed for dinner; as being still, in fact, in the hunting clothes of their individual adventure. However, though the Gentle Reader is quaintly obsolete, the Discriminating Reader, who needs no charts (and must summon a special patience for prefaces), will quite know how to separate the shameless from the better mannered.

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THE LATEST THING

THE LATEST THING

THERE is a real vividness in my recollection of an early definition of "news." When my beginning editor said, "News is essentially the *unusual*," I was able to work out a fine piece of comforting philosophy. If all that we saw on the first page represented the unusual, then people in general were *not* being divorced, murdered, nor robbed; *not* having their houses burned, *not* finding fault with their legislators, *not* punishing their thinkers, *not* dissatisfied with landlords, *not* in rebellion against dirty streets, *not* feverishly interested in clothes and alcohol, nor hysterical about sex.

Under the spell of such a definition it was possible to feel a kind of calmness, an assured serenity as to a preponderant rightness. The worse the first page looked, the heavier the emphasis on the disastrous and the scandalous, the greater became the emphasis on the implied general absence of these appearances. It might have seemed that no practical optimist could get along without the company

of a nice first page, coming, like the Lord's mercies, "new every morning." Reasoning from the certified unusual became a delightfully reinforcing privilege, if not a duty.

There was enough of the plausible in the definition and its corollary to give one pause. History, unless it is the galloping kind that permits the wars and the plagues to bump one another, appears to show definite proportions of the usual and the exceptional. The character in Sudermann who stood at the window, murmuring, "It's always raining," was obviously inaccurate. Weather statistics were all against her. Fire insurance assumes that flames usually keep their place. In the matter of sheer proportion statistical science might appear rather to favor the optimist.

Yet nothing is plainer than the elemental sameness of much that must pass as news. When the "unusual" begins to bore us we become suspicious. In the end we may come to see that not the unusual, but simply the *new*, is the point of emphasis, that while the elementally usual keeps its likeness, superficial newness is constantly in change. The newness is not in the fire, but in the house that is burned. The novelty is not in the scandal, but in the *dramatis personæ*. To-day never happened before.

Interest in the new is as elemental as our

interest in something to eat. It not only has its passion point and its pathology, but its strange variations of expression. Some people are gluttons for newness; in others the new excites aversion. It would be possible to claim that interest in the new is essentially a human interest, since the lower creatures are not addicted to novelties. Yet the aversion seems to be quite as human, or if not quite as human in its degree, at least definitely a human family trait of some familiarity. Perhaps both are equally respectable. History does not make the case wholly clear, though the inference that the new has had the better of it may seem to be pretty well founded.

Evidently both instincts have always been in the blood of the race. A sense of the new is written in the Aurignacian cave drawings. It is certain that a five-o'clock "extra" would have made a tremendous hit in a Palæolithic village, particularly, of course, if it were illustrated. "All the Athenians and strangers which were there," says the writer of the Acts, "spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing." (The disaster to poor Aristides fell when his title lost its freshness. Nothing really old irritates like something that has just ceased to be new. Yesterday's hero must wait awhile.)

Responsiveness to the titillations of novelty

is to be traced in every age. How closely the instinct may be allied to hysteria is indicated in countless instances. (Some punster sturdy enough to carry the *onus* should try newrosis.) And in the shadow lurks hatred for the new simply because it is new. Making terms with this implacable opponent, or going into open fight with it, has scrawled the usual in history. To get itself established the new has always had a monotony of conflict with the haters as well as its perilous intervals with those of its first friends whose intoxication came to the stage of the "hang over." The plain people who, without hatred for either the new or the old, have thought that simple newness is not enough, have often been overlooked altogether.

For some reason people in America are described as illustrating a particularly lively phase of the ardor for newness. Americans themselves are in the habit of assuming that the point is well taken. There is in it a rather flattering suggestion of being "up and coming." We have, perhaps reasonably, come to think that we are extraordinarily clever in invention, and have even grown to be so sure of this that it is often a bit shocking to learn that other countries have stumbled upon an idea or so. The American who resigned from the Patent Office because he was sure everything

had been invented and that the place could have no future for him, indicated what is supposed to be the characteristically restless native temperament. The joke lies, of course, in the fact that this was in 1833. A "glad hand" for the new of any sort has, in general, appealed to us as indicating a progressive temper. We like the word enterprise. "What's new?" is, it may be, not wholly an American salutation, but it is unquestionably typical. We should, naturally, not like to be accused, as in the case of the Athenians, of spending our time "in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing," but we are likely to pardon a good deal to the spirit of alert curiosity, quite as if we had invented that too. How simply human we are in this particular is not often suspected. The antiquity of humanness is to be discovered in antiquity, but antiquity is no place for those who are vigilant for the new. Certainly those who are still doing "nothing else" can have no time to go back.

The nervous eagerness for the new that is represented by fashion—fashion in its modern sense—is certainly not universal. China, for example, has never shown a glimmer of the trait. Plainly there is a difference between a fashion that codifies and maintains and a fashion that expresses the very spirit of change. Both elicit voluntary submission. Both

produce uniformities. But they are utterly different. You might give a gold bracelet to an African savage girl, and she might privately study it with wonder, but you could not make her wear it in public. Where the code is, and has been for centuries, in favor of bracelets in iron or bone or wood, you will scarcely find a figure bold enough openly to display a variation. The pressure of the established is older than the neolithic. The man who endured the ordeal of carrying the first umbrella must have been convinced of that.

The fashion that interprets the itch for change is another matter. This assuredly does "nothing else" but peer tensely for the new. Newness is its basic quality. It subdivides newness. Its high spot is the latest thing.

In clothes this passion is not merely dramatic. It is sacramental. When Emerson quoted the remark that a consciousness of being well dressed imparts a peace and confidence which even religion may scarcely bestow, he was considering the pressure of a social expectation which only a Socrates might ignore. This pressure can be defied. "Bohemian" rebellion (in a New York, for example) may bob its hair and leave off stockings. But its difference is soon standardized, and presently there is no way in which the bohemian can be different save by being conventional again.

The Greenwich Village girl, aspiringly radical, who wept when it was discovered that she was really married to her husband, was illustrating the fate not of a defiance, but of a fashion.

Clothes fashion offers the most conspicuous and the most successful exploitation of the new because, of all the avenues open to the expression of superficial change, it presents the amplest opportunities. Its implements of variation are the most amenable as well as the most spectacular. We must admit this whether it is of something we might choose to call whimsical, or of something as intrinsically horrible as the black lips of the heroine in the movies. Incidentally, newness in clothes has enormous "attention value" compared with almost any other media. A girl with a shrinking mind, diffident speech, and a habit of self-effacement (there are such girls!) can scorch a situation with a scarlet hat—if it chances that scarlet hats have not been happening—and do so without a sign of timidity. A newness in *herself* would be terrifying to her. A newness in the hat, a newness to this point of excoriating conspicuousness, she can carry without a tremor. It is evident that in her mind the hat receives the impact. She insists upon that. If you find your attention fixed upon *her* she is disappointed. "You haven't said a word about my hat!"

Each clothes newness has merely a theoretical life period. There is only a constructive recess between one expression and another. No amœba has a shorter existence. As a matter of sheer dress art, the newest thing dies as soon as it has really happened. In the fever of this iteration there is nothing for it but to beat the calendar—to flaunt a winter hat in the early fall and a spring hat before the snow stops, thus adding paradox to the preciosity.

It is quite plain that no other art has anything like such a privilege. Even the fluid elements of language can reach no corresponding pace. The latest thing in slang has an appreciable life, and you never can tell when it may acquire real age. As Mr. Howells once suggested, the new slang word may drop its *s* and become lang-uage at last. The new word is thus under a double suspicion. It is first a vulgar intruder; then it *may* marry into the family, in which case one has to be civil to it.

Probably it is true that in all the arts mere newness, mere difference, is disproportionately acknowledged. But the refreshment of change for its own sake is never likely to be successfully disparaged on that account. George Moore extolled the genius of Degas because he discovered the possibilities of a shop window. Pennell's discovery of skyscrapers was surely quite as significant and

vastly more provocative. When art pretends that subjects mean nothing at all, it is stressing the claims of surface newness. Insight and its revelations continue to be the final test of genius and to suggest that the new vision is the real advent.

There is always fresh astonishment in the fact that people who are sensitive about newness in one art are so often content with the dregs of another. Evidently most of us are specialists in newness. A woman who would blush to be convicted of a last season's sleeve will use last season's slang without shame. She is still saying "hectic" and that she is "simply crazy about it," without consciousness of crime, and the word-artist, perhaps morbidly alert to avoid the battered phrase, will tranquilly permit the padding to remain in the shoulders of his dress coat.

Scandal, I take it, must be new to be acceptable. If it is not fresh it will lack the pollon of believableness. Since the newest accusation is the most accepted, newness, here as elsewhere, has its own tang. "What everybody believes is never true," says Nietzsche. What everybody has had interval to hear a second time will not be believed by everybody. Fling a scandalous accusation at a man and practically everybody may believe it at first, especially if it is incredible. After a little time even

the stupidest minds lose a little of sureness about it, and with time enough there is always a tendency to outlaw the whole thing because it is old. When the man has been dead sufficiently long the inclination is to decide that possibly it wasn't true at all. In any event, not being new scandal, it isn't imperative to believe it.

Except in the matter of fashion and scandal most conversation is lacking in any pretense of newness. One need not resent this as an absence of artifice. Nothing is more trying than talk that strains to produce new tricks. We are agreed that small talk, like small change, is indispensable. New forms of ordinary salutation would be appalling, and we all understand that when one says, "What's new?" he doesn't necessarily wish to know. A new way of saying, "How are you?" might, indeed, elicit absolutely disastrous detail. We should, I think, make some allowance for this in estimating the conversation, so called, that is incidental to purely social adventure. When Remy de Gourmont insists that talking to some people is "like chewing a blotter," one cannot avoid the suspicion that his asperity acquired its edge not merely from a kind of person, but from a kind of situation. "Starting something" in the wrong place or at the wrong time is often as calamitous for the sensitive as start-

ing something with the wrong person. With regard to talk, it is clear that, in the average experience, most places and most times may seem to be wrong. When we feel savage, most persons quite naturally come into the same classification. All of which tends to give a thrill to the discovery of rightness. Some one to talk to is the object of an elemental hunger, but this need not mean that the some one would be welcome if *his* talk were too new. Haven't you experienced the restfulness of trite persons—persons all of whose ideas and expressions have a mellowed oldness, even when they themselves are quite young? You need no alertness whatever. No impertinent newness will jump into your lap like an intrusive poodle. You can sit back with such persons and enjoy liberty from the prickly contact of real thought. They are as tranquilizing as a geranium.

The real crisis for any of us is in that moment when the great new idea knocks at the door of the mind. It may be but a tapping. It may have a thunder in it. At first, perhaps, while we are interrogating, it gets but one toe inside the door, so that we cannot slam a rejection. (Some people have safety chains on all their mental doors.) The idea may come in the robes of Art. Art, "style," are but the clothing, the expression of ideas, and all ideas do not come in the garb of conscious device. The

challenge of the new idea may come as when, by the Hibernian tradition, a hat is tossed into a room. "Am I welcome?" Being admitted to contact, the coming of the Latest Thing, when it is a veritable Idea, may represent for you the supreme hour. You may afterward show it the door. You may kick it downstairs and hope not to be haunted. You may let it stay. Letting it stay may turn out to be a momentous hospitality, fearfully upsetting to mental housekeeping. When the latest thing carries not a bit of jargon, a frippery of color, a twist of taffeta, a whimsical dissonance of music, a freak of draftsmanship, a changed slouch in the human figure, a fresh futility in politics, a new wrinkle in religion; when it carries not merely a new inflection, but a new flame, a concept, a revelation, that grows in the warmth of the mind to dominating dimensions, and throws into a changed perspective all notions of living and of destiny, the ultimate test has arrived.

History is littered with tragedies of Latest Things that were Ideas. These may have found their man in a climax of action, or in a still night when choice meant a lone agony of renunciation. "Obsessed by an idea." There you have it. A fanaticism is the other fellow's obsession. Then again, the right idea sometimes lodges with the wrong man, or the other

way about. Bitter platitudes rise up to remind us of the reiterated calamities that have stalked the new idea; of how often the new idea sentenced its disciple to the thumbscrews. For the latest thing is often too early. Any new idea is too soon for the shut-minded, and each coming sets up a terror somewhere. The grotesqueness of recantation, the pathos of all the thought-martyrdoms, of figures cringing or courageous under the stare of the established, remind us of how often the latest thing in thinking can be the one unpardonable newness. The record survives, but we become adept in accepting martyrs without feeling implicated. We see Roger Bacon in his cell as a most unfortunate victim of an obsolete stupidity. We are sorry without acquiring any self-accusatory suspicion. Something like an ethical statute of limitations seems to save us from chagrin when we hear about a Galileo as a Harvey. We charge up as a joke upon an earlier civilization the disturbance created by a Darwin, born too late to be burned, but soon enough to be consigned to the hell of the shut-minded. We get the humor of the fury against anæsthesia when it first dares to question the God-established panacea of pain. We roar with laughter over the doctors, in convention, protesting against the railroad (then exhibiting the pace of a brisk trot) not merely as in its effect mischievous,

but as a spectacle that injured the public nerves. We giggle over Ericsson's plight. "You know," said the Admiralty, "your boat with its screw propeller seems to go and to maneuver, but you must see that a craft cannot be steered from the point at which the power is applied." The missiles thrown at a Susan Anthony or a Lucy Stone for indicating that women might safely leave the kitchen for an hour or so each year to go to a voting place remain with us as a merely pictorial whimsicality. The suggestion of a Charlotte Gilman that all mothers are not necessarily good mothers, that affection can be ignorant, that childhood and the race have rights and needs transcending the elemental implications of mere maternity, sent a shiver through sentimentalism, but though day nurseries and co-operative housekeeping have become a commonplace, the same sentimentalism remains vigilantly on the job.

Our quaintly self-conscious era is still at the old tricks. We are still being tested as Athens, or Syria, or Salem was tested. We have abandoned certain systems of torture, retained others, invented a few delicate variations. We still pillory, though only with paper stocks. We still banish, though with a more elaborate collective formula. We are supposed to have a larger sense of history. We admit with an

increasing glibness the book fact of vast progressive change, but we betray the same old disposition to fury when some one suggests that we are not through. The latest thing is right enough if it is amusing; if we can banter about it or buy it or keep our privilege of detachment; if it has a decent propriety in keeping itself separated as a sight or sound. If it assails the All-of-Us, if it insists, if it *demands*, if it involves confession, atonement —if it involves root change—it ceases to be merely the Latest Thing and becomes the Latest Menace. Art, business, sociology all know its interruptions. It is the Eternal Disturber. It is the enemy of all that would "stay put." It checks the yawn of complacency. It jostles the strutting "art form." It frightens the finished. Which is to say that the latest thing is our oldest paradox.

THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE DULL

THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE DULL

THE biographer of Philip II described the Inquisition as a "heavenly remedy, a guardian angel of Paradise." No despotism can be so galling as to quench every apologist. Naturally the despot has a good word for himself, and it is a part of his business to prod his press agent. Quite as naturally the press agent completes the calamity. On one of those days when we feel the presence of Mr. Conrad's two veiled figures, Doubt and Melancholy, "pacing endlessly in the sunshine of the world," the press agent does the trick. The right rhapsody finishes that which oppression began. We bear an oppression because it may have enveloped us gradually with the seeming unavoidableness of a changed temperature, or, if it comes a bit suddenly, like the contact of a shrinking shoe, we may try adjusting ourselves as to an inevitable annoyance; but when some one drives in the nail of the enabling adjective, philosophy fails.

We should, of course, cultivate with regard

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to life what Montaigne cultivated with regard to books—"a skipping wit." But one can't skip a despotism unless it is distant enough. We can be academic about those that are far enough off. We can look at Russia and decide that the dictatorship of a proletariat is good or bad, according to our ideals, and especially, perhaps, according to our information. Perhaps, too, we may decide, with regard to a dictatorship in Russia, that it gets a good deal of attention not because it is a dictatorship, but because it is different.

All of us who are governed live under some sort of dictatorship. The benevolent despotism of democracy can be like a padded cell in which one is supposed not to be able to hurt himself. Mostly radicalism expresses consolation equivalent to a hunger strike. And all dictatorship is not political. The doctrine of supply and demand sets up a mighty dictatorship. So does all dogma for all who accept. So do fashion and family. There is dictatorship in science's word "normal." The prefix "ab" builds an inquisitorial spiked chair for rebel or genius.

There are moments when a sense of individual security may reach so nearly the dimensions of an individual serenity as to remind us that it takes two to make a dictatorship. There are other moments when we feel sharply impelled to go out and look for the dictators

and have the thing done with. In our evenest mood, one in which we feel most assured of being balanced, and reasonably if not fanatically forbearing, we can scarcely hope to escape consciousness of that widest and most permeative of all dictatorships, the dictatorship of the dull.

The dull. . . . Not the frail who have never begun, but the free who have finished; not the stupid who cannot think, but the dull who object to thinking; not the submerged, the thwarted who have never had a chance, but the mediocre who admire themselves, the complacent who have fixed the final mold—all who make up the legion of self-halted men and the sisterhoods of smugness. These have an immensity of numbers. They swarm to the horizon, though they never seem to recognize that there is a horizon. There is no thinkable situation in which they do not impinge. In our arrogant moments we think of them all as Barrier. In our weak moments we may wonder in the matter of the vast, sticky obstacle, whether we are not ourselves entangled and have not begun to belong to the hopelessly finished.

Of course only a mood in which we can quite securely feel that we do not belong can be effective for attack. A plunge into the past is a great help in effecting a sense of detach-

ment. History makes it plain enough that sinister cleverness could not have succeeded without the support of the dull, but it seldom shows how steadfastly dullness itself has stabilized the uncomfortable, how its sheer pervasiveness has affected the eternal conflict between idealism and the forces supporting inertia. Inertia is often confused with dullness. Inertia is, in fact, merely dullness's operating weight. It gives it the formidable displacement that helps block the way. Inertia does not intrude. It has no passion to prohibit, for example. It lets everything alone, good and bad. It giggles or whispers, and subsides. But dullness can have qualities. It can be both obstinate and aggressive. It can assert. Intrusion is indispensable to certain of its moods, because it has its pride, its sense of responsibility, its recognition of a common enemy—the creative.

How definitely dullness represents a mental condition rather than a class, yet quite surely assembles its class, in all ages and in all places, is echoed in every creative adventure, whether the adventure be political, industrial, social, educational, or artistic. It mingles in every group. It hates the radical more than it hates the reactionary, but it shadows both. If liberality cannot be trusted to respect dullness, neither can conservatism. When dullness can

see nothing else it can see its duty. It is the most active censor.

Of course, all criticism is a form of censorship. When it is creative criticism we are in the habit of saying that it fills a high office. When it is dullness in action we ought to have no trouble in recognizing the source, yet furies of resentment often lead us to forget that dullness did not invent criticism nor introduce censorship. Doing away with criticism because it is so frequently stupid would be like abandoning any other useful implement because the foolish or vicious may misuse it.

But dullness's worst offense is not giving any good implement a bad name. Its worst offense is the benumbing influence of its presence. It casts a pall over the creative. It perverts the acoustics of the world. It tramples the gardens of invention; not always by any wish to destroy, as exasperation is ever ready to conclude, yet with all the destructive effects of its weight and pervasiveness. The odd thing is that with so much of mass it is frequently and violently contemptuous of "the masses." It is willing to be the Public. But it is never willing to be Crowd. It is as glib about "mobs" as about morality.

Thus all creative effort encounters dullness as the foreground obstacle, and since creative effort can have its bigotries, deadlocks are

repeated. One sees this again and again in the matter of audiences. It is to be read in myths like that of the Tired Business Man. Dullness's dislike of thinking leads it to use all sorts of evasions to escape admitting the trait; such, for example, as the familiar plea as to having thought so much that it wants a rest. People who are annoyed by intelligent plays or intelligent books do not turn away because they are tired, but because they care more for something else. They may not always be dull. They may only have been dulled. Life has extraordinarily diverse effects on people who live through it. Some people learn to want life to be livelier. Others want it to be quieter; it hurts their eyes and ears. Some people are sharpened by life. Others are blunted by it. Dislike of thinking can emerge from all experience with its prejudice unimpaired. It is a sturdy growth. By an effort it can "set and think," but it can "just set" with a more normal facility. And it can "just set" in a legislature quite as definitely as in a dooryard.

So that to ask thinking is in many situations to ask a sacrifice. It is true that audiences which protest against being asked to think are often able to make out a fairly plausible case against art. Artists are sometimes caught in the act of maintaining that art must not think,

but must only feel. If, as Mr. Max Eastman has reminded us again, art must be "playful" to be successfully creative, if it must be "very free and irresponsible," it is hard to see how audiences can be denied the right to be playful and to watch or to listen or to read in a very free and irresponsible mood. The paradox is, of course, that a playful thing, representing pure response to emotion, is often saturated with thought, and that a joyous response is not denied the right to be intelligent. We have to remember, too, that an audience in a given place is handicapped in thinking where it is not handicapped in feeling. Mass accentuates emotion where it retards thought. With a reader the case is different. Except for the infectious influence of ballyhooing about a book, the reader is left to be kindled by the writer's direct action. Maybe there is for the writer some advantage in this. Yet without the help of spectacle the writer must begin with a larger assumption as to thinking, or at least with a larger assumption as to attention, and the total must count as a handicap in the earning of response. To challenge closeness of attention is the beginning of a request for thinking, and the writer who asks for prolonged concentration asks for something that narrows his audience automatically. He must first lose all who cannot think or who

object to thinking, then all who are good only for a spurt. In time he may come to have the pathetic satisfaction of sharply recognizing the dividing line between people who really read and people who only own sets.

The motion-picture hall has been called a haven for the dull. Certain complaints against the motion picture have been grotesquely severe. Though it begins at zero and can entertain without asking more than mere consciousness, the cinema has an almost unlimited range so far as its possibilities go. I have seen the Odyssey and Macbeth on the screen. Both were admirably done. But they had a short life. The cinema, by the conditions of its present distribution, cannot appeal to special groups, and always to appeal to general groups is to pass under the censorship of the dull. No official censorship could be so relentless. An official censorship can be diagrammed because it starts with a diagram. The censorship of the dull is immeasurable. The one arouses shrieks of protest. The other is accepted as a phenomenon of sale. The strong probability that the preferences of dullness will be translated by another dullness, or by a bewildered producer who is pretty well dulled by the pressure, accounts for the feeble average of merit, and repeated failure to please even the dull.

THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE DULL

Education knows the dictatorship. It knows how often education bleeds between the two millstones. It knows how completely prodigious dullness in school committees and university trustees may reflect the dullness that sentinels and selects. It knows the penalty of offending dullness. It learns to prefer the lockstep of conformity to the strait-jacket in solitary. It knows why, among all the things that are taught, early or late, thinking is most inconvenient and most frequently hazardous. To teach thinking is to teach individuality, and the original is the enemy of the curriculum —and the committee. The efficiency theory of education is of a machine with standardized parts. If any teacher breaks, it is convenient to be able to pick up a machine-punched duplicate at any service station. The theory makes a profound appeal to dullness, because it avoids contact with originality—because it doesn't disturb the finished. When dullness starts out to buy an education for its boy it wants the efficiency kind. It wants standard goods, not the sort that puts ideas into his head.

A *liberal* education! Suppose it *should* happen! Suppose the boy came home with new notions about Rome or the Pilgrims; suppose he came home not with the proper impress of machine-made parts, but with a new *feeling* about history and life, a new sense of personal

privilege, a new impulse as to what he was going to do with himself and the world. What is dullness then to conclude about the system? What is it to conclude as to that bunch of "dangerous radicals" down there? Are the trustees asleep? Somebody ought to be disciplined. Dullness didn't raise its boy to be a Bolshevik.

To dullness, thinking is a radicalism. If you begin by being disrespectful as to your grandfather everybody knows that you are likely to end by being seditious as to your Congressman. If you use your pulpit for talk about life and growth instead of sticking to Jeremiah; if you preach about poverty as a living fact instead of being content to quote it as a literary illustration of a strictly theological compassion; if you forget that revelation is historic, that religion is finished; if you turn from the labor in a biblical vineyard to the labor in your own town factories, dullness will find a way of reminding you that it is no part of a preacher's business to meddle in "politics."

When I wrangled with Emma Goldman about "social pressure," we reached no disagreement as to the reality of that phenomenon. The anarchist thought such pressure was all-sufficing. I thought it needed its written wishes and its committee. But there was no escape, by either logic, from the enormous, enveloping,

and unconquerable reality of the pressure itself. I emerged with an impression that the anarchist saw the great force as reaching a kind of unity, like gravitation, and she could call to her support the formidable philosophy of monism. Yet I saw groups rather than a group—I saw oneness as a destination or an ideal rather than as a working fact, and felt that the anarchism which wanted no law, and any antipodal theory which wanted more law, both were ignoring the persistent diversity that disturbs the oneness of the world. I saw the inert (in all "classes") who go after nothing; the "winged creatures without feet," their eyes fixed on infinity; the real creators and pathfinders; the mothering people who ask least and give most; the herders, the procurers, and the leeches; and I saw the dull who dominate the Middle and think they are Stability because they are a weight.

As a stabilizer dullness always feels itself to be the appointed custodian of respectability. It finds war respectable, and a boxing match an infamy. It is not the sole supporter of war nor the sole objector to the boxing match. But it is a mainstay to both contentions. It is the mainstay of jails. Plenty of jails here and hereafter becomes a concomitant of the dull brand of righteousness. The comfort of being out of jail assumes the presence of a sub-

stantial proportion of the duly padlocked. A dull heaven is predicated on a populous hell. Of all the arguments used to keep a dreamer like Eugene Debs in a cell, there has been, naturally, none that could stress the disappointment to dullness that must result from letting him out.

Yet dullness loves to save if it may discriminate. It saves cats, but is inclined to find the saving of babies as rather messy. In fact, it indicates that babies, by and large, are an indelicacy. Babies suggest sex, and sex—well, you know what sex is. Dullness hasn't been able effectively to rebuke nature's invention of sex, but it has done all it can. It is still respectable to belong to one sex or the other. Beyond that you are in danger.

The dull get themselves divorced, but they dislike divorce as too frequently noisy. They take here the same position they occupy in an apartment house. It isn't the landlord who dislikes children. His discomfort is occasioned not by the children, but by the complaints of the dull tenants who resent the ill-advised fecundity of those who have yet to learn that it is bad form to breed in captivity.

Moreover, to the dull, children are likely to seem an economic error, an error frightfully expensive as well as complicating. Perhaps this is why dullness, after its first violent attack

on birth control propaganda, attained an equally violent silence. The offense of reproducing seems to be mitigated by avoidance of the plural. If one child expressed the idea, why be tautological? Theory, in this instance, is illustrated by the story of the practical man whose wife first had twins, then triplets. When, on the third adventure, she produced a single baby, the husband remarked that he was glad she had at last got down to a good business basis.

The dull are profound believers in "prosperity." They believe in holding the thought. To face toward prosperity one must turn his back on the opposite. It is well enough to see a slum from a sight-seeing bus, but if you contact it too closely, if you admit it fully, you are letting it influence you, and if you let it influence you how can you give single-minded attention to prosperity? How can you "get on" if you stop to listen to all the blind, or maimed, or sick, or ill-treated that line the path? There was a Galilean who stopped repeatedly. Dullness crucified him.

Where "Society" has a capital S, dullness is in charge. American "Society" is accused of being the dullest in the world because it alone leaves out the intellectuals. We cannot deny that it omits certain elements indispensable to a European social group, but it might be inac-

curate to contend that it has not tried to get these elements in. It is possible that American intellectuals are less perfectly house-broken than the European sort. And it would be foolish to assume that scientists, writers, and political pretenders cannot, when rightly selected, add a harmonious dullness to a society anywhere. It is sufficient to note that the organized emptiness called "Society" is utterly congenial to dullness. To be free of any of these people with ideas, to dodge books and paintings, to dismiss with a stale adjective some play dullness has interrupted by coming in late, to shake off the horror of "labor troubles," to talk a jargon, dance nakedly, devour filigrees of food, and fatten in limousines, appeal to dullness as an inexhaustible resource.

Yet dullness is so sensitive as to any frivolity in which it may not happen to join, that one of its most persistent activities of intrusion is in demonstrating that an indecent levity is the other fellow's amusement. In avoiding an issue that might be convicting to itself it is fertile in devices of segregation, and is equally fertile in ways of breaking in upon situations its own cowardice has invented. Wicked gambling is the kind it does not practice or has not agreed to overlook. Naturally it seeks to hold the copyright on all definitions of sin,

and particularly to guarantee that no sinners shall be amused. Macaulay supplied the classic characterization when he said of the Puritans that they objected to bear baiting not so much because it hurt the bear as because the spectators got too much fun out of it.

The sarcasm of Macaulay has been useful to modern exasperation. The berating of the Puritans has sometimes been stupid and sometimes brilliant. The Puritans cartoon well. They are a wonderful theme, and not the least serviceable contribution of Puritanism has been that of a label for anything we don't like. Giving to the divagations of dullness the label of Puritanism seems to me altogether too much of a compliment. The Puritans may be responsible for Puritanism, but they are not responsible for all that in our haste for a handle we fasten upon the name. The Puritans were suspicious of beauty, and openly hostile to joy; they believed in a solemn God, a God disappointed and jealous, and they saw duty in the gray light of that belief; but they were hard thinkers if not good thinkers; they had no antipathy to thinking in itself. Critics of the Puritans will protest that they had a very clear idea of the directions in which thinking must not go, but this cannot disturb the contention that they were essentially a thinking lot. They thought their way out of Europe.

They had pluck and punch, and any dull descendants or other members of the breed of the dull in general do not deserve the glamour of their mantle.

It is equally plain that the dull do not deserve the distinction implicit in the cries of savage irritation which are always being wrung from those who feel challenged. A thousand confessions prove that this rage can become a preoccupation. "We begin to live," says Mr. Yeats, "when we have conceived life as a tragedy." Who shall say how much this sense of the woeful may be due to that overlaid irritant of dullness? One of the ablest of American literary artists turned to me, in the midst of a social adventure of an eminent pleasantness, and quite as if the thing had flashed to him out of nowhere, to remark that all great art is created in a state of acute exasperation toward life. I was reminded afterward (when we are reminded of most things) that a conspicuous absence of dullness in the occasion had doubtless given twist to the thought. Perhaps Flaubert and others who have flung out parallel acerbities have reached incandescence at times when relief from pressure reminded them, in a piercing degree, of its essential unendurableness.

In any case, getting the thing said is evidently a relief. To conceal irritations is to

germinate another complex. There is, of course, no assumption that the dull will hear. "It is not by insulting the Neapolitans," said Cavour, "that you will modify them." But modifying the dull is an inconceivable undertaking, as inconceivable as a dullness that is not modified, that does not undergo changes in form and expression. It is change of form and expression which is always leading to misplaced labels and to failures in identification of the eternal traits that lie underneath.

LOOKING LITERARY

LOOKING LITERARY

IN the course of one of his dissections Henry James expresses a disenchantment the like of which, it is to be feared, has come to many another. "It was a truth," he says, "of which I had for some time been conscious that a figure with a good deal of frontage was, as one might say, almost never a public institution."

Such a disenchantment may well be gradual and reluctant, for even the most sordid science seems to foster an expectation that phenomena will, in some recognizable degree, look the part. To be sure, we may early encounter the shock of discovering that Alexander the Great, Cæsar, Napoleon, Wellington, Grant, had no heroic proportions, that they were little men, as men go; but history and poetry alike see to it that these figures are invested with abundantly identifying marks of greatness. We may have learned, then, to spare mere stature, dubiously as we may have done it in the case of the fighters, without altogether

giving up hope that the natural lapse may be corrected in later evidences.

Mr. Howells has commented somewhere upon the popular attitude of mind as illustrated in the familiar remark, "I thought he was taller." That the marked man should be discovered not to be tall is, unquestionably, a fact perennially disappointing, even after something like resignation has been acquired. A stunted hero retains the capacity to give us a pang, even when he is not making Wagnerian love to a towering Brünnhilde.

This attitude of mind is evidently not essentially vulgar or even juvenile. Writers of eminence have not been immune from the habit of halting before brevity of stature in other writers, for example, even when the discoverers are not so candid as Carlyle, who quite inevitably pounced upon De Quincey as "one of the smallest men you ever in your life beheld," and found Macaulay "a squat, thickset, low-browed, short, grizzled little man of fifty." The rather brutal tautology in Macaulay's description had, of course, collateral provocation. You will guess what it was. Margaret Fuller, whom the caustic philosopher in Cheyne Walk set down as "a strange, lilting, lean old maid," remarked that "the worst of Carlyle is that you can't interrupt him." Macaulay, who was a pretty good torrent himself, with

plenty, as Emerson put it, of "fire, speed, fury, talent, and effrontery," tried the impossible, and got all three adjectives. How much worse Miss Fuller might have fared is to be judged from Carlyle's memorandum that she was "not nearly such a bore as I expected."

Thus it was inevitable that George Ticknor should observe that Schlegel was a "short, thickset little gentleman," and that he should be relieved, apparently, to find Goethe "something above middle size." To be only "something above middle size" seems but vaguely alleviating, yet it serves the purpose of rescue from the class that is more sharply noted. If Chesterfield, for instance, could have grown perhaps a couple of inches further, Thackeray's picture of him as "a little, beetle-browed, hook-nosed, high-shouldered gentleman" would have been shaven of at least its most accusatory term. And the term often is an implement of resentment. Naturally the Goncourts mentioned that Sainte-Beuve (whom they did not like) was small and of the provincial librarian type. Lamb was irritated when he picked out a London contemporary as "a middle-sized man both in nature and in understanding." Of course, even face-to-face, opportunity does not always assure conclusive estimate. Miss Hawkins says that Walpole was tall; Pinkerton as flatly declares that he was short, though

both agree that he walked as if the floor were wet.

And here is our great difficulty when it comes to calling up images of the literary great by the agency of personal testimony. "Figure," says Carlyle, "a fat, flabby, incurvated personage, at once short, rotund, and relaxed, with a watery mouth, a snuffy nose, a pair of strange, brown, timid, yet earnest-looking eyes, a high tapering brow, and a great bush of gray hair, and you have some faint idea of Coleridge."

Not so faint an idea, perhaps, if we went no farther. But how shall we reconcile the Carlylean brutality with Wordsworth's portrait of the "wrapt one with the godlike forehead, the heaven-eyed creature"? It is such disparities that might well drive us to a Cubism which forgot the outward and visible sign altogether, and showed us Genius in a geometrical litter.

Yet it is just these outward and visible signs that are least likely to go unsought and unmentioned. Neither nicety nor ardor of description has ever seemed certain to insure forgetfulness of the outward shell. No adversities of contact deter us from eagerly reading descriptions which may disturb, or from writing the same sort of thing to jostle some one else's preconceptions. Sometimes, it is true, the meeting or the description may be pleasantly, or at least interestingly, corrective. "Instead

of having a thin and rather sharp and anxious face, as he has in his pictures," writes Professor Ticknor, after his meeting with Byron, "it is round and open and smiling; his eyes are light and not black; his air easy and careless, not forward and striking." But we shall meet our shock, you may be sure, before we have gone far. We shall have idealized a Fielding, then wince to learn that "a few pensive lines about the nose showed that snuff and sorrow had been there." We shall have been holding fast to some proper sort of reverence for Doctor Johnson, then run across a description of the spectacle he presented at dinner. Indeed, the anguish of discovering that our giant is not tall will pale before vastly more distressing readjustments. It has been said with some air of authority that Æsop was "so repulsive that his master's wife could not stand his presence in the house."

The instinct by which we go on hoping, if not expecting, to objectify our ideals and our prejudices cannot be wholly sentimental. Though we may be piqued by the paradoxes, surely there is something elementally practical in this expectation that "looking the part" will, in some final and utterly verifying instance, become a fact. Despite Macbeth, there must be an art "to find the mind's construction in the face"—an art questioned, to be

sure, when it is made a profession, yet one not at all in contempt when it is practiced in the connoisseur spirit. Nothing in post-Darwinian science seems to scold us for the expectation.

Moreover, since life so persistently imitates art, we must take into account that faces may endeavor to look as they are expected to look. If Epictetus was serious in saying that "we ought not even by the aspect of the body to scare the multitude from philosophy," it need not be entirely fanciful to suspect that exponents of literature have felt the same obligation. Indeed, Mr. Zangwill dares assert that Tennyson "dressed for the part almost as well as Beerbohm Tree could have done."

This influence of the multitude is to be reckoned with. Max Müller, who was astonished that English universities should try to develop manliness without duelling, admitted that in German universities "pistol duels are usually preferred by theological students, because they cannot easily get a living if the face is scarred all over." While Epictetus, like the clergyman, was influenced with regard to the "aspect of the body" by the conditions surrounding the delivery of philosophy in person, and while the literary man is not commonly a man of the forum, the chance that the writer may hide behind his book grows daily smaller. The psychological century is the most pictorial of all.

No one who is not an habitually prudent anchorite can be sure of escaping publication on the screen.

Epictetus did not specifically insist that the philosopher should look like a philosopher. Max Müller has not said that the clergyman must look like a clergyman, but the multitude will, you may be sure, go on matching the mask to the fact. Gil Blas found Doctor Sangrado to have "a medical face." Lucky Doctor Sangrado, to fulfill all logical requirements and escape the halting obscurations! Shakespeare, living before photography, is assumed to have looked properly poetical, and thus avoids infinite explanation of one sort at least. Nowadays, shouldered by the camera, the painter must be so literal that we cannot hope to beg the question. Even Futurism does not sweeten the details.

"He does not look like a literary man." There you have it, much reiterated, in newspaper descriptions, in "literary gossip," current and between stiff covers. How he should look, to look literary, we never are told. How he does look, now that he does *not* look literary, we are informed in countless phrases.

In earlier times it was different. There can be no pretense that genius ever advertised itself by infallible signs; but there were good old days when you were supposed to recognize

a poet as quickly as you would a policeman. This must have been a great comfort. If you doted on poets you could be grateful for the label that made it easy to pick them out. If you disliked poets, or if you were merely cool about them, you might be equally grateful. The long hair was an immense help to the imagination—to the poet's, I have no doubt, as well as to the spectator's. It became a sign, and much of humanity joins the Tammany chieftain in welcoming the "symblem."

The danger always was—and it came in for remark long before Mr. James's skepticism as to the "public institution"—that ample locks and a Byronic collar could be acquired by persons who were not literary at all, much less poets or real Parnassian toffs of any sort. Nature will have its joke and men will connive. If no one could be so great as Daniel Webster looked, I have no doubt that no one could be so transcendently literary as some of the counterfeits have succeeded in looking.

But this does not change the fact that, though the poet, for example, might not be standardized, there was a standardized expectation with regard to him. There are a thousand descriptions which prove the existence of an accepted mold for the literary personality, though most description goes by resentment of variation. Goldsmith reminded Miss Rey-

nolds of "a low mechanic," particularly of "a journeyman tailor." Rogers was never forgiven for being ugly; so gracious an observer as Mr. Whipple saw "something withered and ghastly in his appearance." The same writer was quite sure that Lewes was "one of the homeliest men in Great Britain." Miss Evans said that he looked like a "miniature Mirabeau," though she afterward (that was a richly significant afterward for both!) admitted that "he is much better than he seems." De Quincey was well enough pleased with the head of Wordsworth, but Lamb's head, he declared, "was absolutely truncated in the posterior region —sawn off, as it were, by no mean sawyer."

Tennyson was an instance of the popularly acceptable type. Mrs. Carlyle, who evidently regarded him as extraordinarily handsome, discerned "something of the gypsy" in his appearance, and for her this was "perfectly charming." Comments on the impressiveness of Tennyson recall the ardor of Pope in ascribing to Wycherley "the true nobleman look." But of all handsome authors our own Motley appears to have been most fervently described. Lady Byron declared that he more resembled her husband than any person she had ever met. To Wendell Phillips this was not praise enough, for he insisted that Motley was handsomer than Byron. Bismarck, who met the American

at Göttingen University, says that Motley's "most striking feature" was his "uncommonly large and beautiful eyes," and that he "never entered a drawing-room without exciting the curiosity and sympathy of the ladies."

However we may hesitate to commit ourselves to any theory of form, there can be no doubt that Hawthorne, Poe, Whitman, Longfellow, Bryant, and Doctor Hale all visualize well—quite as well, perhaps, as Daudet or Flaubert or, for that matter, Balzac. Lowell always seemed to me to look more literary than his portraits.

When we turn to the later type it is difficult not to feel that the last vestiges of human picturesqueness are slipping. For the Delilah of uniformity has shorn the world. Can the august modern author feel the complacency of Mr. Pepys when he had used his new "razer" after a week of lying fallow? "How ugly I was yesterday," he bursts forth in his diary, "and how fine to-day!" If a literary man delays having his hair cut until his family has begun to cut him, he may experience the emotion of virtuous accomplishment when the thing is done. But his soul knows that he was not merely procrastinating. Some subtle emanation from sacred tradition had the effect of checking him. Perhaps the idea of a *Zeitgeist* with scissors actually made him shrink.

The hard contemporary fact is that the gloriously maned authors are becoming sadly rare, even rarer than long-haired actors. The long-haired musician is still with us, though he is no longer imperative. Individual age has here a potent influence—age, or the getting through with things. What a wonderfully picturesque person Dickens was at twenty-five! And how matter-of-fact at forty! Browning suffered a similarly sobering and averaging effect. The same thing is true of many other figures in that period, and it is not easy to guess whether the changing fashion set in during their middle years, or whether advancing age would have effected the same change in any case.

Those of us who feel bereaved by the departure of the distinguishing aureole from the head of the type will linger sentimentally among memories inspired by Mark Twain, by George Meredith, by Parke Godwin, by Donald G. Mitchell, by Joaquin Miller, as well as by the bearded ones, like Fields and Alden and Scudder and Stedman and John Fiske. It may be that my impression of John Fiske's head was affected by the bigness of the man, but surely that head was more than ordinarily vikingesque. Beecher one day called to a person in his audience to join him on the platform. "Come up here, you shaggy man!" was his

challenge. It was Edward Eggleston. But, alas! Eggleston trimmed that splendid mane in his twilight years—a calamity as profound, it seemed to me at the time, as if old Walt had trimmed his.

It might, then, be urged that a change of fashion has made identification of the literary man a nicer, a more exacting matter, though this would be to affront the tradition that there really is, in the strict sense, a literary face. But it does not at all explain why literary men so frequently (as I have suggested) look specifically like something else.

Close upon thirty years ago one critical commentator noted that Ibsen "did not look like a poet," but "like a prosperous railroad president." It was earlier, I think, that I read of George William Curtis as looking "the beau ideal of the English country gentleman." One of William James's pupils insisted that he looked "more like a sportsman than a professor." Mr. Davis described Coppée, seen at the Grand Prix, as "suggesting a priest or a tragic actor." James Payn looked "more like a prosperous physician than author."

Again "prosperous," mark you. There is something in that which should, perhaps, be examined. Mr. Howells in his sixties was not so often described as looking like a "prosperous banker" as he was, say, a score of years

earlier. Evidently the phrase had had its day. Authorial prosperity had become trite. Yet what other prosperous thing *can* you look like after you have looked like a prosperous banker? Most of us would be willing to stop there.

And having ventured among the moderns, I may note that later evidences are strangely puzzling. John Burroughs and Doctor Mitchell may seem to touch the traditions. So do Barrie and Conrad and Galsworthy. Bliss Perry, Robert Frost, Brander Matthews and Hamlin Garland I have never hesitated to include in the group. Stevenson quite filled all reasonable expectations. Yeats runs true to form. But Kipling and Hardy and Hewlett we are likely at any moment to see designated merely as typifying what Henley, in the case of Thackeray, called "the gentlemanly interests." Photographers being as perverse as paragraphers, Chesterton's portraits often make him resemble Dumas. Personal meeting brings contradiction, if not a sense of paradox. (I should like to have verified, in person, the extraordinary face of Nietzsche.) Chesterton has no more the traditional look than Hugh Walpole or Wells or Mencken. Unless there is to be a new standardization, I see no hope for anything better than one of those distressing descriptive evasions in the matter of Swinnerton, for example, or Dreiser or Tarkington or Huneker.

Of course there is always the chance that the lack is not of a "serene Olympian beauty," as in the case of Goethe, but of some one to say it—that these disenchanted times are deprived not only of make-up and stage properties and some reasonableness of lighting, but of the essential spectator reverence. There can be little satisfaction in looking literary if there is no one to notice—if there is no one even to *think* that impudent, "Excuse me, sir, but are you anybody in particular?" If the passion of curiosity that once led to dainty inquiries about quill pens and writing paper may seem to have been frustrated by habits of dictating to a nice girl with a white nose or of ecstatically tapping a type machine, and if asking for an authorial curl is made unthinkable by a cropped condition of the literary cranium, it would be fatuous to deduce too much from any coincident situation. It is more than probable that there would be people to look literary—quite archaically literary—if there appeared to be anyone to enjoy it. Even "literary" writing is open to caustic suspicion. Perhaps one of the first effects of a genuine class consciousness in the literary is a wish to participate, to avoid being coddled as a parasitic class, to escape the sinister luxury of being kept. One might build up any sort of conclusion from such fantastic speculation—as that, for example, the

literary are in rebellion. To be in rebellion they ought to be different, and to be different they would have to be more like other people. And so on.

Parallel considerations intrude upon any backward glance at the superstition as to the feminine literary type, a subject which I modestly avoid except for a parenthetical allusion. It is notorious that the feminine literary type was once traced by its clothes. Evidently tradition had furnished no other absurdity to go on. If the clothes were antiquated, particularly if they did not fit, the lady was literary. Short hair was the subject of remark; but short hair did not mean that she was literary. It meant simply that she was emancipated, which was quite another matter. Being emancipated could be established by saying so; whereas being literary involved objective testimony. Happily, these ribaldries are obsolete. Now that literary women are quite commonly fashionable (fancy a hobbled blue-stocking!), only a supreme audacity of analysis is likely to find courage or get a hearing.

Indeed, one must feel that the whole question of looking literary takes on a delicate hazard. It may be that only a proper committee might determine the ethics and incidental subtleties of the situation. I could fancy such a committee (the chair reserving its *ex-officio* privileges). It

would consist, let us say, of Mr. Chesterton, Mr. Mencken, Miss Lowell, Mr. Dreiser, Mr. Hergesheimer, Mr. Gorky, and Mr. Lawrence (Mr. Cannan or Mr. Cabbell as alternate). Mr. Shaw I should exclude as one of those forward-looking reactionaries that are hard to adjust in a committee room. If the committee ridiculed its obligations we should gain some good stuff. If it arose fervently to the great opportunity, we should acquire a stabilizing codex. If we were told that for good and all we must abandon, as bad sociology, Hogarth's aspiration to "see the manners in the face," our duty would be plain. It would be equally plain if we were enjoined to regard a new and nicer formula of effect and of identification. Sentiment and Science would sit at the committee-room door with a nervous patience until the verdict came. Literary History would be at a little distance, its robes jealously close, and displaying a cultivated and superior frown.

THE TRUTH ABOUT WOMEN

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"WHEN I have one foot in the grave," said Tolstoy to Maxim Gorky, "I will tell the truth about women. I shall tell it, jump into my coffin, pull the lid over me, and say, 'Do what you like now.'" That the threat was not merely whimsical is more than suggested by Gorky's comment: "The look he gave us was so wild, so terrifying, that we all fell silent for a time."

Gorky, who, on his own account, seldom gives us occasion to suspect him of being a postponing commentator, makes it plain enough in the narration of his talks with the awesome compatriot that Tolstoy was usually ready with the ultimate word, that he was willing to call a spade something just as bad. Yet in this matter of the truth about women there is the effect of pause before the unspeakable. We are, indeed, left with a feeling that, after saying so much about women in one way or another, Tolstoy, impatient of codes, excoriatingly contemptuous of trimmed opinion,

tolerated the pressure of one reserve—that one complex was to be last to die.

Any theory that his deferred analysis was simply something ungentlemanly is, of course, scarcely tenable, since he had been unquotably candid on many an occasion which seemed to establish clearly enough a fact of no reserve whatever. If he had been a devout feminist all his life, the last-moment declaration might have been, for example, a simple recantation, a leering or passionate confession of hatred long concealed, a defiance of all cowardly conveniences. Having published his disenchantment, having grinned at the puerilities of romance, having stripped sex of its glamour, having rivaled St. Chrysostom in scathing description of the female, what could remain to be spilled at the brink of the grave? Certainly that "terrifying" look could not promise anything sensationally sweet.

Aside from the foolishness of planning for a one-foot-in-the-grave crisis, it is to be noted that even a Tolstoy would, with the best or worst of intentions, or the keenest of expectations, find himself to be Tolstoy to the end. And being Tolstoy to the end, Tolstoy habits were likely to hold.

A marked Tolstoy habit was that of promising to be more violent if not more conclusive. Probably this habit is always likely to be

present in those whose business is expression. The best that may be said will leave art in debt to the thought and the emotion. Only one who is greater than anything he does is ever likely to do anything great. Thus margins of the unexpressed are inevitable. And what is true of the artist is doubtless true, in some degree, of all of us. Indeed, it is quite evident that it was not the artist side of Tolstoy that recognized, or lamented, or threatened as to things unspoken. The grizzled seer who raged before Gorky was starkly human in his ways, and was never more male than after he had long accustomed himself to maleness as a reminiscence, and to femaleness as a spectacle. Old age, even of the mellow kind, seldom fails to secrete some acrid distillation. A theory, a prejudice, a rebellion, can acquire in the fermentation of years a bitterness of savor that is often shockingly in contrast to perhaps conspicuous urbanities which accompany them.

Amid all such survivals sex hostilities present a sharp effect. Perhaps the effect is accentuated by fading signs of sex. We do not need the support of Mr. Freud to believe, for instance, that old maids of both sexes (for I speak of a state of mind) are often the most acrimonious critics of the drama of sex. Simple old age, whatever its history, naturally recruits the non-participating gallery, and we often

have occasion to suspect the making of common cause between those who have always been aloof from the drama and those who are aloof at last—between irritated nonparticipants and disenchanted survivors. Naturally, too, a Tolstoy, confessing a history, would claim to speak with special authority. A participant is always the more dogmatic. If he has seen the folly of a thing, he feels superior in authority to one who has only guessed it, or reasoned it, or has lacked the enterprise to reach the limits of folly.

In this matter Tolstoy would have admitted or insisted that he knew what he was talking about. His disciples unite in revealing his definitive style of speech. Coleridge wished that he might be as sure of anything as Tom Macaulay was of everything. Gorky and the rest found that it was better to let Tolstoy keep the floor when he chose to take it. Johan Bojer said to me of a certain eminent British literary man he had met: "I wondered why he was so *angry* about things." Evidently one never wondered about Tolstoy. His angers had a sublimity. He could be Messianic, and he could slash like a Hebrew prophet. His denunciations were appalling. They were more likely to make his hearers "silent for a time" than to loosen contradictory talk; so that Gorky was following the practice in leaving as

it fell this mystery of a promised last cry. Yet it would have been appropriate, I am sure, for some one to suggest that Tolstoy write the tremendous thing and leave it with his codicils, marked, "The Truth About Women."

Men have always exhibited an anxiety as to this matter of the truth about women. Sometimes the anxiety has shown in an eagerness to tell it themselves. Again it has appeared in the tone of their welcome to some one else's disclosure. The great thing, we might gather, was recognized as having the truth told somehow, this with the implication that the truth had hitherto been withheld, or perhaps merely mislaid. The very young or the very old have been most conspicuous in the field of revelation. Male creatures of, say, seventeen, have been known to acquire a sudden and absolutely conclusive insight into all womenkind. Beginning without bias, perhaps (and quite usually), with a special disposition of favor, these very young investigators have been known to emerge with a conviction of having been grossly deceived. No later sureness can hope quite to equal this first sureness. In its passion of resentment, in its squirming humiliation at being fooled, in its bitter betrayal, as at the altar of all hope, adolescent conviction can reach a suicidal intensity. The soured adoration of a boy does not say, "You know

how women are." In the midst of the cataclysm a boy believes that no one hitherto has known how women are. He is the appointed Columbus on the sea of sex.

Where the young cynic is indignant, the old cynic is progressively contemptuous. He perhaps recovered from that first indignation, and passed through a long mid-period of mature and judicial investigation. Then he knew. He has not merely a belief. He has a knowledge. In the presence of a cross section of feminine psychology, with all of its revolting revelatory detail, he intrenches himself at last in a settled exasperation or in a complacent disillusionment capable of sitting up, under challenge, to be witheringly final. The old cynic may have preferred, or may think he has preferred, the meek, "womanly" type. He may, on the other hand, have had a dream of a woman who would be not only easily inflammable, but gorgeously explosive, and of himself as carrying the only flame. He may have looked for violet eyes, or for some one named Iseult; for a woman superbly stupid or for one as sophisticated as a blonde stenographer. It does not matter, once he has reached the stage of well-ripened disappointment. He acquires a rich store of citations. He backs contemporary testimony with classical examples. He points to a history reeking with evidences of the awful

truth about women. He is ready to indorse the report of the Preacher, who found one sought-for man among a thousand, "but a woman among all those have I not found."

Possibly there was a time, in the youth of the world, when the truth about women was less a discovery, less something flashed in an apocalyptic moment, and more a brazen fact of common understanding. Yet this seems doubtful. Some truths are essentially of the hiding kind. It may be that men have intuitively aided the hiding of this one. They have claimed as much. They have seemed to drape woman with what they have wished her to be, then exulted in tearing off the covering. They have set her up like a graven image, then hurled missiles at her because she did not answer their prayers.

Literature is rich in anthologies of disenchantment. As a subject, woman has been as necessary to pessimism as to romance. She has been the goddess, and she has been the goat. *Cherchez la femme.* Something has always been wrong with the world. Nothing could be clearer in the records than that it has been convenient to find woman as the explanation. If any era gets ready to decline and fall, track down the odor of musk. When a man or a civilization is "successful" there is a rush to woman. When there is failure, it is

toward woman that the accusing finger is pointed. The Bible begins with the sad story of woman's culpability, and it ends with a scathing allegory that sets the image of her erring body in a high and horrible prominence. The devil is male, as befits his large functions, but no literature conceals his chief weapon. The sacrifice of the anchorite is an escape from women. The mind hates abstractions. Even the male mind, that alone is supposed to be capable of abstractions, has preferred to personify. Having decided that angels are male, it fixed the images of Life and Death. For Temptation it made a digression. Woman is Temptation, *vide* Genesis and all the epics. Having envisaged Woman as Temptation, it has been easy, under the spell of antithesis, to envisage Man as the eternal St. Anthony, with the supreme preoccupation of not succumbing. He is the searcher for the Holy Grail. She is the vampire. He is pictured as persistently aspiring, she as persistently vamping.

The truth about her, then, would be assumed to point toward unmasking some secret whose betrayal would destroy her power, or at least, and at last, fortify men against the danger. Man has felt compelled to go on marrying her and, by the promptings of a dogged optimism, even to go on pretending that she is what she ought to be. But he has always found some-

thing pleasurable in confessing the pretense at the right moment; and he has never ceased to hope that the coming of the truth, something more than the superficial truth with which everybody is familiar—the penetrating, ultimate truth—might do its great work. In a large literature of exasperation there are countless signs of a feeling that illusion should be dispelled for good and all; that, as in the matter of some dog ordinance, women should be tied up, muzzled, or otherwise subjected to a safe restraint, and that the sex hitherto victimized should be educated to a new caution, a new severity, and especially to a new sense of custodian responsibility.

This sense of a custodian responsibility doubtless explains much that has happened and much that has been said. A ruling that women shall not smoke in some place where men are freely permitted to smoke, is no more indicative of this sense of custodianship than ten thousand acts and opinions which have gone before. The past is littered with eloquent indications of man's intention to take care of women. His peculiar methods of taking care of them are often hard to read at a distance, but these methods have been steadfastly maintained. The need to take care of them was predicated upon theories which he was at some trouble to invent. And he was continually

forced to do fresh inventing, for new considerations came up. His ingenuity never waned. Even when social rearrangements introduced extraordinary complications, he was ready. He still worked on a basic premise. He was in charge.

I knew a man who had not done any real work for twenty years. His wife was the wage earner. He let her add to this the cooking and the mending of his clothes. But he remained the head of the house, took her money, and made a tight allowance to her for lunches and carfare. He was not original or peculiar. He had the basic philosophy to go on. He was a perfect example of a tenacious tradition. Once the world had its formulas beautifully arranged.

There came a time, however, when the basic philosophy began to look frayed. The whole theory of taking care of woman involved her occupying a "place," so that one who played the part of a showman exhibiting the world might be free to say that over there, in a cage, were the women. But the women broke out of the cage. They roved over the whole picture. This made it exceedingly difficult to go on thinking about taking care of them. And conditions that made it difficult to take care of them made it not less difficult to know the truth about them. The first condition of taking care of children, for example, is knowing

just where they are. When women stopped knowing that their proper place is in the kitchen the trouble began.

Then some one announced that there was a sex war. A sex war, like any other war, must have an original lie back of it. The original lie back of a sex war would be that the sexes are essentially antagonistic. There are people who believe that. Such a belief can breed a state of mind in which there arises a yearning to tell the truth about women. Some people have a passion for discovering antagonisms. They would like to build an inverted monism that revealed the universe as an extension of the Kilkenny cats. To tell them that the antagonism was not in sex but in interests growing out of sex, that these interests had been affected greatly by a one-sided pressure, and that they were subject to change with world change, would be to take away a certain comfortable misery. Moreover, it would to an awkward extent interfere with, or, at all events, take some of the zest from the attainment of that great ideal of revealing the truth about women.

The tendency to believe that there is a special and sinister "truth" about women, in whatever types of mind it may appear, and at whichever stage of age or youth it may manifest itself, was nourished by conditions that

quite plainly have begun to disappear. No supplanting conditions can be quite so favorable to a successful attitude of male supervision or privileged male analysis. Womankind will never again be an incidental element of mankind. As civilization advances it will grow harder to indicate women as representing one of the minor appointments, harder to think of them as a creature group. They have smashed the tradition of "place." They have overrun the forbidden industries and professions. They are doing all the things they are unfitted for. They occupy judgeships. They sit in legislatures. They have accepted fusion in the melting pot of world effort.

This ought to prove, I suppose, that the truth about women must now be much more complicated than it used to be. It ought to prove that a vision of the truth about women must become a vastly more subtle matter. It might turn out to be a more annoying truth than it ever was before. Yet there is a better hope. If maleness can no longer be put on one side of the picture, and femaleness on the other, where each group may glare at and accuse the other; if the blending of effort in affairs means anything; if there is any wisdom in saying that there is no sex in science or in art; if religion may revise its bisecting dogmas; if women themselves may join the preachers and

prophets, the obliterations must do something to traditions of antipathy, must at some point begin to suggest, even to stodgy or senile minds, the oneness of mankind.

A new Tolstoy who should threaten that, when he had one foot in the grave, he would tell the truth about humanity, would not be credited with a superior impudence. He would be credited with an inferior humor. The notion of a separable truth about women will begin to wear the same complexion. The real truth about women will be known when the real truth about men is known. To have read one will be to have read the other. The aspiration to do the reading will always be praiseworthy. Such an aspiration is indeed inevitable. It has always existed. It has always been defeated. But it would be a misfortune if frustration enfeebled the wish. This supreme curiosity is indicative of mankind's desire to be a participating creator. So long as man wants to know, his power will increase. If he ever really knows, he may be awed. He may indeed find the truth terrifying. Yet he will by then have lost some of his fears, perhaps even his fear of women and of words.

BIBLIA PAUPERUM

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IN a supreme court trial room I saw that the tattered covers of the Bible were loosened, and that against the calamity of its complete dismemberment the book was tied, in the manner of a package, with a thick string, this way and that. One is accustomed to note that the state does many things shabbily, yet this was a spectacle of a special shabbiness. The robe of the supreme court judge was decently whole. The garment of the supreme word was in rags. As so much symbolism the situation was provocative. Even amid the many ironies of a court room this irony stood forth. It stood forth because one could not let it escape as merely an irony to be accepted with the other tarnished stage settings of a tribunal. It threatened to be comic, and thus to approach the supreme impudence. And it stood forth also for something pathetic that belonged not to the book, but to the perfunctory and rather sodden performance in which the object glimmered now and then.

The scene and its grotesque feature carried

me back a good many years, to the time when I was a court clerk, expert in hieroglyphs for purposes of record, and my judge brought in a new Bible, wrapped in his morning paper. At the coming of the new book I begged for possession of the old one. The judge looked at me narrowly, as he looked on the day when I hunted the passage from Isaiah for the defendant's counsel in the larceny case, and remarked that I was quite welcome.

And now the venerable volume lies before me, *cum privilegio*, its tattered dignity illuminated by the softening light of reminiscence; a fat little book, born at Blackfriars, its leather coat shining like a smith's apron, its "full gilt" dulled to a mellow bronze.

For ten years I had watched them salute it —petitioners and paupers, "hard" criminals, children propped to the bar, bent old men, women who winced and interposed their gloved fingers, clergymen who raised it solemnly, gamblers who grinned and shifted their tobacco to the other side, strange peddlers who made a revolting noise.

In the first place it had seemed by precedent to be kissed on the flat of the cover. I fancy this was the form in the days when, as in the phrase of Scott's jailer, they "smacked calfskin" at the old Scottish courts, and were bidden "the truth to tell, and no truth to

conceal . . . in the name of God, and as the witness should answer to God on the great day of judgment"—"an awful adjuration," says the chronicler of Effie Deans's trial, "which seldom fails to make impression even on the most hardened characters, and to strike with fear even the most upright." In those days the witness was called upon to repeat the words of the oath, a form which must greatly have increased its solemnity and have deepened the difficulty of maintaining those mental reservations more readily associated with an often flippant nod of the head and a perfunctory touch.

Doubtless it was some sense, æsthetic or sanitary, of the accretions of time which led the court officers who controlled the fortunes of my Bible to form a practice of holding to the witnesses' lips the gilded edge of the volume, and in the latter days of its service the officer, if the witness were a woman, and particularly if she were a pretty woman, would invidiously open the book and offer her the relatively unfrequented space of a random page.

It had been kissed by juries, the men first standing in a circle with hands outstretched toward it, the officer then thrusting it, sometimes with grotesque ineptness, into one face after the other. Frequently it had been lost

for definite minutes, until the cry went up in the court, "Where's the Bible?" On more than one such occasion the judge indulged in an old jest: "The stenographer's very fond of it. Search him." This was because it once had been found under my elbow after a prosy opening argument by counsel.

The spectacle of my absorption in the book during a summing up sometimes seemed to amuse the judge, who reserved the right to read a newspaper throughout a pathetic passage by the lawyer for the defense. At one time he appeared to feel that I was covertly preparing for the ministry, or that my voluminous notes not demanded by the procedure of the court were designed to further the ends of some fanatical reform.

I was testimony clerk during the incumbency of this Bible, and sat upon the right hand of the judicial chair in a bare justice's court, on the side near the witness stand, the Bible on the ledge before me. The Bible was the beginning of everything. The complainant, police officer or civilian, saluted it after signing the complaint. The special interpreter, Slav, Hindu, or Chinese, impartially took oath upon it before in turn swearing the witness. When the witness was a Hebrew it frequently happened that the book was opened so that he might place his hand upon the Old Testament section, and he

was permitted, and sometimes directed, to wear his hat for the space of the ritual.

During the ten years of my observation the practice of affirming with uplifted hand, in preference to the older form of oath, steadily grew. The choice to affirm was generally accepted without comment, though I can remember that at a not remotely earlier day the affirmant usually underwent interrogation as to his reasons for eschewing the oath, his attitude toward the Bible, his belief in a supreme being, and his sense of obligation as related to the affirmation. These forms are supposed to be duly regulated by statute, but in fact they vary, and vastly, within statutory areas.

The entrance of a child complainant or witness often introduced a curious scene. Eliciting facts from the mouths of babes is a dubious business in any circumstances. In the shabby witness box of a justice's court it is often painful enough, not least so, perhaps, when it is superficially amusing. My notes show many strange answers from the bewildered youngsters called to exploit psychology before a heterogeneous audience.

I can see the judge leaning forward and asking in his most reassuring tone, "Now, little boy, do you know what it is to swear?"

The Boy: "I know that I mustn't swear."

The Judge: "I mean to swear on the Bible."

The Boy: "I know that it's very wrong."

The Judge: "No, it isn't wrong to swear on the Bible. But let me ask you, do you know what will become of you if you tell a lie?"

The Boy: "I will die."

The Judge: "And what else?"

The Boy: "Go to hell."

It was at this juncture that the lawyer who offered the child as a witness was likely to interpose by saying, "I submit, Your Honor, that the witness is entirely competent," and perhaps some feeling that the fear of hell is the beginning of wisdom would influence the acceptance of the child's testimony, the court shamefacedly watching the innocent lips pucker over the book. Indeed, the familiar procedure seemed to go upon the assumption that nothing else was to be done.

On another occasion:

The Judge: "What will happen to you if you swear to tell the truth and then tell a lie?"

The Boy: "I will be punished."

The Judge: "By whom?"

The Boy: "By the judge."

The Judge: "Anybody else?"

The Boy: "The policeman."

The Judge: "Who else?"

The Boy: "The jail man."

The Judge (*gravely*): "Will no one else punish you?"

The Boy (*brightening*): "Oh, yes, my mother."

Not infrequently the young witness would reply with great promptness, giving sign of precautionary instruction, as for example:

The Judge: "What will become of you if you tell what isn't true?"

The Boy: "God won't like me and I will go to the bad place."

That the solemnity of the oath to tell the truth and nothing but the truth remained well forward in the mind of the witness was often indicated in the phraseology of the testimony. An indignant witness, questioned too pointedly as to his sincerity, cries out, "What did I kiss the book for?"

"You swear that?" demands the lawyer of an irritatingly specific witness.

"Yes, sir, on a thousand Bibles!"

It was a commonplace of the minor trials, in the midst of a witness's recital, to hear a saddened voice from the benches, "An' you just after kissin' the Book of God!" Nothing could have been more dramatic than the interruption of an aged defendant, a lank Irishwoman, who leveled a bony finger at the witness and declared in a deep, anguished tone, "God is listenin' to your discoorse!" And, the interruptions having been many, the judge added: "So am I, madam. Sit down."

It was a trick of spectacular witnesses to use the Bible as a means of completing an illustration as to how certain objects were disposed, and, when it was availably near, a witness was likely to pick up the book to indicate the manner in which some missile had been thrown. Of the average witnesses it may be said that his habit toward the little black volume was quickly and continuously reverential. Many reached for it as a means of emphasizing their integrity by ostentatiously holding it in their hands.

I recall the figure of a white-haired man who stood straight and solemn, with his hand upon the book. "I want to say," he began, "to the judge and you gentlemen around here—"

"Oh, never mind us gentlemen," interrupted the opposing counsel; "say it to the judge."

It is, of course, the business of the opposing counsel to belittle the witness in his greatest moment, but nothing of this sort has ever seemed to me more brutal than an incident in dispossess proceedings, when a little, old-fashioned, white-faced woman, stretching forth her hand, said, with gentle fervor, "Judge, this good book tells us—" And the landlord's attorney, breaking in with a rasping voice, snarled, "Madam, we haven't asked you to interpret the Scriptures. Do you owe this rent or not?" The woman mutely turned her face

to the lawyer, and her sob brought a moment so intense that the judge, his eyes moistening, lowered the gavel with a bang and ordered the crowd in the back to be quiet, though there was not a sound there.

On another morning an old man, under stress of a harsh cross-examination, caught up the book and with incredible quickness opened it at Proverbs. "You find fault!" he cried, extending a shaking finger to the text. "Read that!" And the lawyer, fascinated by the unexpectedness of the challenge, actually read aloud, "Answer a fool according to his folly."

The book, lying here aloof from the turmoil of its one-time surroundings, evokes scene after scene of this kind. I see it under the hands of trembling women who totter in the crisis. I see it grasped by eager and pugnacious veterans in discord who pant for the excitements of the trial. I see it in the hand of the judge, himself administering the oath to a witness from whom, in a great perplexity, he asks the very essence of truth. I see it suspended while the accused, at the brink of a trial, debates with his counsel a plea of guilty. I see it hurriedly restored to its accustomed place when the accused, about to take the oath, has fallen in a heap, and there is a call for water and the doctor.

One March day a fragile girl bearing a very

young infant, with an accusatory gesture, stepped to the stand, keeping her eyes away from a pale young man who sat in the prisoner's chair. He was a mere boy. His mother and a lawyer sat on either side of him. His look was half dogged, half frightened, and he never took his eyes away from the face of the girl. The little mother at the bar had just kissed the book and was adjusting herself in the witness chair, when she gave a startled scream which no one who heard it is likely ever to forget.

The baby had died in her arms. My recollection gives me a confused picture in which I see the pale-faced young man pulling aside the wrappings of the baby; and I hear the later formula of the judge, in which there was "charge upon the county" and "case dismissed."

I remember another day when a fragile old man was arraigned upon a charge of theft in a business house. The charge was a mistake, and this soon appeared. Throughout the hearing the man himself had been singularly quiet and dignified. But his wife, a Quakerish little woman, pale and set, watched and listened with an anxiety painful to see. When the judge dismissed the charge, with some regretful word for the injustice of its having been made, the woman arose and kissed her husband. Then she came forward, lifted the Bible, and tremblingly touched the cover with her lips.

"THE LAST OF THE GREAT"

"THE LAST OF THE GREAT"

WHEN it seems essential to clinch a contention that the world is going to the bad, nothing is more effective than the pointing out that the last of the great in some field has just passed beyond. A feeling of apprehension and even of desolation may sometimes be induced by some general picture if the picture is drawn with sufficient violence, but the simple announcement that "the last of the great" painters or actors or statesmen or historians has just slipped away stirs a sense of being left high and dry in an arid wilderness of a world. No other trick can effectively rival this one. If there are no more great, all argument is ended. The earlier time that produced the great is logically exalted. Inferentially, it had the punch.

The departure of the great is sometimes cited not merely as offering reminder of the desolation that remains, but with the effect of suggesting that the great are going in disgust. When the great, and specifically this last one of them, looks for his hat, hospitality may well

seem to be scathingly accused. There is an implication that somebody should feel ashamed.

Usually somebody does, and asks why more greatness hasn't been provided. If there is a greatness shortage, something should be done about it, preferably at once.

In the average case, I fancy, there is a tendency to conclude that our present inferiority, established by that word "last," may not of necessity be final; that things may look up later on. You never can tell. When some one says, "There used to be Wagner, and now we have Sousa," when a month of America is compared with a cycle of Europe, the absurdity usually escapes challenge under the spell of the formula, and the common expedient is to plead for mercy upon the interval.

I recall the startled realization that came in first reading Plato's reverent reference to "the ancients." There were, I soon discovered, no ancients who did not look back toward other ancients. There was also, among those who looked back, from a time however remote, a disposition to believe that "there were giants in those days." The whole phenomenon of ancestor worship carries its implications of a satisfaction in this belief, but the tradition has always gone further. Races have enjoyed the notion of being importantly derived. Individual men may have been willing, like Congreve,

to say, "I came upstairs into the world, for I was born in a cellar," but races are less comfortable, it would seem, in parading a humble origin. Descent from the big has had a superior appeal to the imagination. Perhaps this accounted for much of the rage against Darwin. To be comfortably settled with family portraits of people who came over with the Conqueror or in the *Mayflower*, and then to hear an upstart talk about antecedent hairy ones—well, it was too much. Neither Darwin's "exploded" evolution or any other sort will ever make ascent as popular as descent. We seem to prefer to have come down rather than to have come up. Logic and pride may give us satisfaction in a great descendant, yet this glory at its best seems never to attain the utterly complacent ecstasy of having a great ancestor. For one thing, a descendant is still a responsibility, while an ancestor is finished. The past has the security of its perspective.

Carlyle found in this security an explanation for any habit of regarding the past as beautiful. He points out, as to the past, that "the element of *fear* is withdrawn from it"; it is safe, "while the present and future are so dangerous." It is circumstantially true that many persons elect to live in a more comfortable past, and mentally inhabit to the end a period that was, of course, much less comfortable to

those who literally lived it. Jealousy of the past is, after all, a rare sort of subtlety. Jealousy of the present is a commonplace. At the great pause the voice of jealousy drops to a whisper. Living, your man is an obstacle, an intrusion, a problem; dead, he can be no worse than a moral force. Living, he is a politician; dead, we can afford to let him be a statesman. Living, he is a scribbler; dead, he is an author. Incidentally, to call him great when he is dead is one way of impressing the living. To call him the *last* of the great is to put the obstreperous living quite where they belong.

The rebuke, made most dramatic by the concrete example of the disappearing last one, is reflective of a castigating attitude of mind that is very old, but has to believe itself new to keep its energy. The answer of Mark Lemon is classic. When some one said, "*Punch* isn't so good as it used to be," Lemon was prompt. "It never was," he said. Castigation is seldom strong in its perspectives. The appetite for *Punch*, like the appetite for pie, may have a good memory, but a bad historical sense. The pie mother used to make established its qualities in a young stomach. That "old-fashioned snowstorm" measured high on young legs. The orator we heard in boyhood was the real thing. He lifted us out of our seat. Can this new-fangled speechifier do that? That adven-

ture story kept our boy eyes staringly awake until sunrise; at forty we pick up one of these modern pretenders, without a trace of bigotry, impartially eager, in fact, to give a fair hearing. And what happens? We are asleep before the first chapter is finished. How can you compare a romancer who puts you to sleep with one who kept you awake all night? Yes, there were giants in those days.

Philip Hone, once mayor of the city of New York, having returned to private life, attended a mayor's reception on New Year's Day, 1837. When he came home he wrote in his diary, "The manners as well as the times have sadly changed." "Sadly" changed, you observe. Change persistently contrives to be "sad." Don't take my word. Go thou to the records.

Scan London in the seventeen-nineties, when the last of the great were departing with absolutely panicky results. The decent, the decorous, the distinguished were disappearing. Manners were, of course, "sadly changing." Cropping the hair was regarded as a prodigious affectation. Cutting off coat tails was worse. The Earl of Spencer's jacket was remarked as "a humiliating fashion," and you may be assured that women's dress was disapproved as equivocal, if not licentious. Bare shoulders had been forbidden in Italy. Great Britain got out a yardstick for skirts. History is, of course,

full of the expedients of collective modesty. Government suggestion was always an abominable interference, and always as if interfering had just begun. Recent American efforts to regulate the height of heels recalls the statute under Edward III that forbade anybody under the rank of knight to wear pointed shoes measuring "more than four inches beyond the natural extremity." (Some one should devote a tome to "the natural extremity." The social and spiritual parallels to the natural extremity —best minds to fix that delicate point of the *natural*, so definitely measurable in the case of feet—offer a theme of extraordinary suggestiveness. There is only one other word that reeks with so much fun as "natural." That word, of course, is "normal.")

As you will have suspected, the London *Times* was ready to say, "It would not be easily believed by our great-grandmothers." The last of the great-grandmothers said it before she went. Horror—that was her state of mind. It did not matter that this happened to be in the seventeen-nineties. How perfectly these words would have fitted any period down to last week: "Tell a servant now [1795], in the mildest manner, they have not done their work to please you, and you are told to provide for yourself." And, wages having gone up to *five dollars a month:* "I look upon their exorbi-

tant increase of wages as chiefly conducive to their impertinence." Although any doctrine of original sin should have prepared us, it is nevertheless disenchanting to discover, as with original jokes, that the past spoiled many of our opportunities for fresh wickedness. There in the twilight of the eighteenth century, "Take care of your pockets!" was a "usual cry" in the lobby of the theater; it was indicative of a calamitous decline that the Prince of Wales should go to a prize-fight; impatient protest made it increasingly plain that there were too many lawyers; and as for politics, what could have inflicted a deeper pain on the last of the great than the open sale of public office? "Five hundred pounds," read one advertisement (1779), "will be given to any Lady or Gentleman who can procure the Advertiser a Place under Government where the emoluments will be liberal compensation for the sum proposed, and but little attendance required."

Could anything be more affronting to our sense of originality than that casual fling, "but little attendance required"? Have we been surer of anything than of inventing political short change? Can it be true that Charles Lamb was not joking when he said, in the matter of his public job, that if he came late, he squared himself by going away early?

Writing men have, indeed, not only seemed

from the beginning to be fearfully human in conduct, but they have been quite as ready as the average wayfarer to "view with alarm." They have always seen changes as "sad." Huysmans's bitter phrase, "our vile time," has a classic adjustability. Long before Sir David Lindsay they had begun considering "the miserabyll estait of the world," frequently as if Mr. Maesfield might be right in discerning the exultation of "a delighted brooding on excessively terrible things." "Our whole system," said Alfred Henry Wallace, "is rotten from top to bottom." Decay—that is the point of emphasis; we have always been degenerates. No wonder, then, that Wallace could find that "our social environment is the worst the world has ever seen." He could believe in evolution, but he did not escape the frailty of believing that *his* humanity had slipped back. The cry of Felix Adler before the Great War that "we are living in a time of moral chaos" is but a paraphrase of things said with the same vehemence by Seneca and Marcus Aurelius. Doctor Eliot finds "a quite general coarsening of manners." Paul and Chesterfield made the same discovery. Balzac was sure that there was no longer a nobility, but only an aristocracy. Scott was not without hope, but he seems to have been sure of the contemporary slump. "When the taste

for simplicity," he says, "is once destroyed, it is long ere a nation recovers it." Ruskin, of course, was violently resentful of his time. "It is simply and sternly impossible," he declared with a caustic gesture, "for the English public, at this moment, to understand any thoughtful writing." Even the urbanity of Renan yielded to the human habit. There is a pathos in his way of remarking, "People understood this forty years ago"; that is to say, forty years ago, in the good days of the old-fashioned snowstorms. You may be assured that Carlyle was not without positive consciousness of a depressing plight for the immediate generation. "Alas!" he mutters, "the age of substance and solidity is gone for the time; that of show and hollow superficiality—in all senses—is in full swing."

"Gone *for the time*" is a perennial. Each generation is sure that it has a copyright for "superficiality." Robert Grant's lament of to-day's "easy-going optimism," and of the way "standards are swept away" by malcontents with a "smattering," touches the same note, though Judge Grant can be ironical about the tired business man without a trace of any traditional despair. American complacency is his mark, just as American smugness is the mark of Theodore Dreiser when he maintains, in a certain stalwart document tingling with

controlled wrath, that "our ignorance is appalling," that "in the main we are unbelievably dull and wishy-washy."

Mr. Dreiser's arraignment of American colleges is a reminder of the antiquity of scholastic perverseness. If Lady Mary Montagu thought her education "one of the worst in the world," so have most British geniuses before and since her time, frequently with the effect of fortifying Jeremiah in his pronouncement that "ye have done worse than your fathers." Carlyle has another "Alas!" to fit the case: "Such is the miseducation of these days!" Half a century later Mrs. Gerould cries, "How in such an age can culture flourish?" When Agnes Repplier sees disaster in "letting down the walls of human resistance" by offering as play what should be stern school work, so that the elements of education might be absorbed "without conscious effort, and certainly without compulsion," she is but echoing a misgiving that has taunted instruction since the caveman parent was first admonished not to spare the club. You may pick up traces of this misgiving in any century. "I have ever found it a vain task," said Oliver Goldsmith, "to make a child's learning its amusement; nor do I see what good end it would answer were it actually attained."

Poor old education! In a day when it was hard, Montaigne could emerge from college

with the anathema that he had brought nothing away "but a hate and contempt for books." At each sign of a softening there has been the warning cry to "Treat 'em rough!" and ever, at each step of the way, there has come the voice, like that of John Butler Yeats (though he is no pessimist), to murmur dejectedly, "Yet we wonder that the world no longer produces distinguished personalities."

Probably Mr. Yeats would have called Henry Adams a distinguished personality, yet Henry Adams himself was as disappointed at the beginning as at the end. Adams, who often gives the impression that, like the tagged dog in the baggage car, he "chewed up where he was going," and would have us believe that he never did get anywhere except into the book where ultimately we find him, might have called his book by Edgar Saltus's title, *The Philosophy of Disenchantment.* Adams's trouble was that he was too much a descendant. If he had been busy as an ancestor, with concrete responsibilities as to some one else's education, he might have had less time to despair.

It is needless to indicate that art has not only always been dying, but that in each season it has just died, leaving a gray waste behind it. No class of critic seems to have escaped the automatic influence of years. As an example of this influence, take the same Montaigne,

who began with a repulsion, with no reverence at all, but who did not escape the age-old and old-age habit. "I am not greatly affected to new books," he says, "because ancient authors, to my judgment, are more full and pithy." It is only new books that give us the scalding phrase, "modern trash." Who ever heard of "ancient trash"? Our scorn of the contemporary output is nourished, doubtless, by the common feeling that an indifference toward the arts has just happened. "To-day," said Rodin, "mankind believes itself able to do without art." To-day is mercenary. To-day men paint for money, accept checks for their poems. Who can associate filthy symbols with the creator of a Madonna? The Greeks, the Romans, the men of Italy's golden age, are assumed to have labored under a high emotion that somehow left them free from economic pressure. To suggest a Michelangelo driving a bargain or a Rembrandt truckling for an order would be not only sacrilegious inculpation as to these divinities, but insultingly disturbing to the notion that the advent of a mercenary period persuaded the last of the great to take himself off. The theory that men used to write and paint and carve and build under impulses of pure devotion has in it, I am sure, something good, however mistaken it may be.

An earnest woman once asked me whether

I thought Lot's wife had really had a square deal. I felt forced to admit that Mrs. Lot appeared to have been a victim of that disproportion in punishments which is equaled only by the disproportions of popular glory. Larger bearings became apparent. The truth is that only those who look backward can wisely look forward. False deductions from the backward look are the basic calamity. The Preacher apprehended the danger. "Say not thou," we are warned, "What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this." Science supports Ecclesiastes. When Huxley sums up our knowledge of the ethnological past of man, he finds that "so far as the light is bright, it shows him substantially as he is now; and, when it grows dim, it permits us to see no sign that he was other than he is now."

Certainly H. G. Wells is here, as often elsewhere, incorrigibly a modern Preacher. He has excellently belabored those who have not "enquired wisely." He has said his say about the giants of "those days." He has taken mighty pains to prove how the long ascent of the past "gives the lie to our despair." He demands a place among those who cannot be fooled about "the last of the great." Incidentally, he has strikingly fortified the truth that no history ever was or ever can be other

than opinion. Reading history for "facts" is not only a prodigious, but a pernicious, delusion. Each of us may be and must be his own historian. Each of us must find his own way of not being fooled. If we are lucky, we shall be able to do this without belittling either the big of the past or the big of the present. We shall see, for one thing, that if each era has been able to apostrophize the last of the great, the great must always have been present. If the great, like the poor, are always with us, we need not despair, though we may choose to reserve all of our rights in the quarrel as to their identity. We may learn to measure movements and peoples as well as individual men with some glimmering of proportion. We shall perhaps learn to greet as well as to bury, learn to encourage by high expectation as well as to commiserate in postmortem tears. Having learned to accept all report of the past as so much opinion, and thus to have acquired the privilege of occupying it ourselves, we shall be the better prepared to consider the present as ever subject to our individual measure. If a Strindberg, in agony or in petulance, speaks of "that madhouse, that jail, that morgue, the earth," we may be reminded of his right to a personal opinion.

In the end we may come to realize that a consciousness of the strategic as well as the

stupid quality in the phrase titling these remarks may have a practical usefulness in the presence of any stodgy contemporary criticism. That static criticism which finds its nourishment and its dogmas in the past, as distinguished from the dynamic criticism which is fed by the blood of the present, has the advantage of seasoned formulæ. It knows the effects of fear. It knows that a humanity born in sin is self-distrustful. It knows the mesmeric force of the accusing finger and the bitter word. It knows the witch-doctor trick at the funeral pyre. To the moribund formalist death is an eternal text, reinforcing to every theory that we live in a rotten time. To the creative critic, young or old in years, but eagerly alive, with a passion of belief in the immutable processes, it is birth that stirs the pulse of prophecy; it is the unfolding of genius rather than its withering that kindles concern; it is the living sign rather than the graveyard symbol that stirs to action and warms the cockles of a provocative expectation. The creative critic will fall into no frenzy of lament over the great dead, because his homage will not have waited for death. He will have kept his judgment books in balance. He will have appraised the forces of his time not in terms of age any more than in likenesses to tradition, but by the high measure of a patient faith.

HALF GODS AND THE GODDESS

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MARY AUSTIN has candidly pointed out a significant situation in American intellectual life. This implacable feminist reminds us that while Europe's culture has always been androcentric it is always "tempered and mellowed by the wisdom of mature women." In America the situation is different. "The ancient tribal usage which holds the older men should rule while younger men adventure, mature women mediate between them and young women be husbanded, has given place to a system of isolated groups which have almost the force of caste." Conspicuous among the isolated groups is that of our young men thinkers, who seem to themselves, by Mrs. Austin's analysis, "the sole apostles of American culture." The sharp arraignment adds: "One can imagine that the future, looking back on our time, will see this schism between young men and mature women as the greatest singularity of our bisexual organization."

Without exonerating "our so-called intellect-

uals," who would not be intellectuals if they were without assurance, and who cannot be blamed for being young, Mrs. Austin sees one explanation for an anomalous and hampering phase in the fact that women are less ritualistic than men. There is no difficulty in showing that in sheer culture women have attained a full partner status; that in the sciences, for example, they work side by side, and in a soundly equipped equality, with the men of their time; but their failures of deference to form, their deficiencies in the formulas of expression, have prevented a natural participation with "the smaller, more ritualistic groups of men thinkers." This is equivalent to saying that their religions may be good enough but that their theologies are inferior. And since men are left to establish ritual, women are left to reach intellectual exchange through media fixed and controlled by men—through magazines edited by men, for example.

The anomaly is indicated not by the existence of this particular divergence in the mental habits of men and women, for that divergence has always existed; it is reached in the changed proportions of the groups. All that is expressed by the word culture is represented to-day by a group of women larger than the corresponding group of men. It is the commonplace to yield to women the custodianship of culture. Women

apply culture; the smaller group persists in demarcating it. Art may seem to say, Let me create culture and I will not ask who lives it.

Of course those who arrogate code will expect to lead. "Form" is as characteristic of politics as of painting. Since art is not merely expression, but *communication*, the masters of art must be masters of *contact*, and it is easy to build up beautiful sophistries in support of the ritualism which thus holds itself to be vastly important. The worst of it is that ritualism reaches the point where contact quite disappears from its thought, and we face the paradox that those who see, and who feel intensely, but who forget formula, are more eager for influential contact than the absorbed artistic priesthood of ritual basking in the glow of its own stained glass.

Naturally, they who have forgotten whither they are going and they who have forgotten to consider transportation are both wrong. Ritual for revenue only is a sin, and so is indifference to the immensely difficult matter of effective expression. When Mrs. Austin says that there is a marked disposition on the part of the women leaders of women's thinking "to pay the price of form," we must assume that she means dictated form; for there can be no communication without some form, and if form is indispensable it is worth its reasonable price.

Plainly, what Mrs. Austin objects to is not merely an artistic double standard, nor even a dictatorship of tradition, but the loss to intellectual life which she deduces from this failure in fellowship.

To the reader of this page all such questions may seem grossly academic. Yet, since art cannot really be separated from life, though some of its votaries often seem to wish it might, Mrs. Austin's resentment has more than a professional bearing. She is thinking of social growth, an indulgence which certain of the intellectuals are sure to regard as in itself a disqualifying innocence. There is no need to defend her implication that the arts have a social obligation, nor to waste time on those fanatics of form who preach liberty and live in a cage. Neither is there occasion to emphasize the fact that "so-called intellectuals" have never had any discernible influence upon the arts. The arts have been moved and enduringly influenced by the strong-arm men and not by the male sewing circles. Unless Mrs. Austin is considering a larger group than I have in mind—she *seems* to be considering a very small group—her protest appears as a profounder compliment than the group deserves. And after all there is the chance that a group may turn out to be theoretical. We build a good many groups by antipathy to states of

mind, and a group may acquire the dimensions of the antipathy.

However, there remains the question of the young man and the mature woman, and if that question were distinctively American it might be worth while to determine its antecedents. I doubt that it is a distinctively American question. I doubt the postulate of a new schism between young men and mature women. I suspect that it is the same old schism. The effect of difference in Europe is largely due to a tradition. Doubtless there is a difference, but that difference has been exaggerated by literary history, for example, and especially by the picturesque history of the *salon*.

The *salon*, which wanes in Europe, was never successfully transplanted to American soil. Efforts to add it to our social stage-setting have sometimes been grotesque, sometimes pathetic, and not infrequently funny. The *salon* is predicated on one woman and a gathering of men. It has varied from that basic notion, but it was at its best when so ordered. Under the older European system all men were detached or detachable. Thus men could not only be "brought out" by a skilled woman, but had the advantage of meeting one another, whether the women were clever or stupid. The woman supplied essential social initiative. She was entitled to the glory of the adventure and

had much of that from grateful gallantry, in print and out of it. Also she did not escape the flings of criticism. Perhaps she succeeded best when she was herself not too abominably clever. Madame de Staël was right enough when she interrupted Coleridge, who wanted to talk all the time and would have nothing but silence from everybody else, yet she was too good a talker herself to make an ideal *salonette*. Goethe and Schiller, as well as Coleridge, complained of her. George Sand, whom Nietzsche disliked and Baudelaire called a chatterer, may not always have been adored, but she was ever interesting. "She was," says Huneker, "pre-eminently the critical midwife to many poets, pianists, painters, composers, and thinkers." This, it appears, is the quality the effective mature woman must have. By the opinion of Huneker, George Sand had "the feather-bed temperament, and soothed masculine nerves exacerbated by the cruel exigencies of art." The urbane Renan assures us that she "drew charming pages from people who had never written a single good page." The wonder of woman was more than a gallantry with Renan. He was writing of Emma Kosilis when he wished that he might be "born again a woman" to study the other phase of living instituted by the Creator—"so that I might comprehend the two poetries of the thing." No woman could

ever have any trouble with a man who thought in terms of "the two poetries."

But the *salon* as a historical phase is too devious for any digression. The circumstance that we have failed to import it is my present concern, for if its withering in America is due to the strictly social mechanics upon which the *salon* is based, we might find here a simple explanation for the offensive fact that men flock too much by themselves, or do not sufficiently flock at all except in theoretical groups.

It does not seem to me to be debatable that American *salons* failed because they could not detach the men. Of women as wise and as charming as any Europe has produced there have been plenty; of men who could be shaken loose from other interests to pay homage to a focal woman and an idea, there have ever been few. Among all other interests, that of marital privilege and obligation has been dominating. An American may be capable of forgetting that he is married, but he likes his wife to be named in an invitation, and when his wife is invited she sometimes goes. A *salon* with wives stops being a *salon.* It may be something just as good, or much better, from some other point of view, but it ceases to represent the same idea, for it dilutes the group in the proportion of its nontechnical additions. In a bisexual group a merely accompanying husband is as

diluting to the idea as a merely accompanying wife. The coeducational *salon* has ended by meaning nothing more than a social party. It could be held together by a "purpose"; it could have social charm for those who were capable of enjoying social charm; but it could represent no interchange parallel to the *salon* interchange.

Thus an American Madame Mohl, who set about gathering men, was squarely confronted by the specter of the wife. Even young men are likely to be married, and the young married are often more ritualistic about such things than the old married, even when they have the reputation, in intellectual matters, of being quite devilish. And an American Madame Mohl soon found that she wanted at least a few of the women who, in growing numbers, came to represent not only intellectual aims, but intellectual achievement. This increased the complexity. A married man might join a strictly masculine group presided over by one woman, and some deference to a theory of essential form might justify to the absent the presence of the one hostess woman. But if there were other women—! No, the thing could not be done.

So that the American woman who sought to establish a *salon* had more to encounter than any question of her own equipment. She

might be a motherly Hannah More, who had written nineteen dull volumes of her own; she might be a deferential George Eliot, who found association with intellectual men to be "an indisputable source of feminine culture"; she might be a sparkling De Staël who frustrated "unlimited soliloquy" and who, if there must be what De Quincey called a "symposiarch," was ready to enter the lists on her own account; in the end, if not at the beginning, she must encounter the insuperable obstacle of a changed life about her.

It would be futile to suggest that the wholesome interchange and co-operation which Mrs. Austin prefigures must be dependent upon the welfare of any institution so archaic as the *salon*, yet it cannot be denied that the conditions which inhibit the *salon* still have an influence on such independent interchange. Mrs. Austin notes that "there is even in the American mind a slight suspicion of impropriety in the idea of free association between young men and older women." The American mind is full of suspicions that are more than slight. Particularly where sex is concerned, the American mind has a spinster alertness for the improper. As a mind it has a secure conviction of a superior decency, and thus feels itself to be endowed with a copious discrimination. Fortunately, business and professional

life have opened opportunities for "free association" that should hold certain compensations for any social loss. American thinking can find ways of submitting to grewsome suspicions and intrusions, but it has shown unexampled liberality at least in surface toleration for competition in the arts and sciences. It thinks it wants this competition to be free, and if it is free it will establish its natural communications and fellowships. Even sex rivalry, which must always exist, and which only a deluded idealism could hope to obliterate, cannot be inimical to cultural advancement. It should, indeed, be a stimulating help. Cultural advancement is not to be attained without conflict. If there is to be a "woman culture" it must fight its way. It must meet a man culture. It must, for instance, meet critics like Joseph Hergesheimer, who points to women's influence upon letters and refuses to recognize the influence as a beneficent influence because it is of women. It must recognize that a woman culture, like a man culture, will have its grades, its falsities and futilities, its blind alleys, its mincing niceties that bring the very idea of culture into contempt.

The advantage of individual association between the mature woman and the young man in furtherance of art would be the kind of advantage that would accrue from such asso-

ciation in furtherance of life. The advantage would exist both in the woman and man fact, and in the youth and maturity fact. The "mature" have spoiled a great deal of youth, and youth has added many a prickly discomfort to maturity. Youth, if it has imagination and energy, is likely to be preoccupied with rebellions. Rebellions are as necessary as the later recoveries from them. Just how youth recovers is of great importance. It is always possible that a wise enough maturity may help it to recover without loss, or at all events with accumulated compensations. Tolstoy said of Dostoievsky that "he felt a great deal, but he thought poorly." When maturity improves the thinking of youth it is quite within its reasonable function, but when it hurts or rebukes youth's power to feel and to dare, it inflicts a blight.

The right mature woman always has and always will have a profound influence upon young men. She will not be a Victoria, driving her bishops and ambassadors to the ignominy of lying full length upon the floors of their bedrooms to smoke up the chimney. She will understand her young men, and she will be a means to their larger understanding of life. She will express to them not barrier, but proportion.

I can fancy her taking one sort of wild young poet in hand quite as if she were not taking him in hand. I can fancy her telling him that

we expect a man poet to be male, but that by the same token we expect him to be a man, if not a gentleman—that a poet is no more released from the obligation to be a gentleman by something in his art than a clergyman, let us say, would be released from being a gentleman by something in his theology—that a he-man poetry has been written and will be written again. I can fancy her listening (and making a mighty good audience) to his *chansons grise* and his *fleurs du mal;* hearing him promise an incorrigible violence or saying, as Albert Samain said to his notebook:

> I dream now of composing little things, light and exquisite, made of nothing and deliciously suggestive, like certain slight Chinese poems. They ought to be fragile and precious as porcelain, like tiny porcelain cups, from which one drinks a drop of concentrated tea, whose fragrance lingers for hours.

I can fancy her as being finely tolerant, encouragingly responsive, to both the vigorous and the precious, but as drawing back when, in an effort to be a beautiful blackguard, he ended by being questionably beautiful and imperfectly a blackguard. If she happened to find him with the notion that he is "strong" if he is nasty enough; if she found him looking for a voluptuous liberty that would be somehow utterly irresponsible, talking about *nous autres*, the divine flame, and the vulgarity of a world that asks you what

you *mean*, she might hit upon a way of persuading him that it is possible to be liberal without being libidinous, that it is possible to be like Rosalind's magician—most profound in his art and yet not damnable. She might be able to show him that there has been no instance of a really great poet who harped endlessly on harlotry and hyacinths; that it is, in fact, possible to be incidentally male, that to be gloriously male the maleness *must* be incidental, and that to be everlastingly hunting adjectives for sex and sunsets is to overlook quite a large number of other interesting considerations.

I say, she might. And he might be influenced. He would make allowance for her disqualifying femininity, but to him this might not, after all, be so disqualifying as an older masculinity. A good weapon, if she knew how to use it, would be evidence of his triteness, for although he might stick to it that oldness of subject would prove that he had hit upon the elemental, to trace in his newness of manner something actually quite as old would be arresting. But her best method would be to let him alone, shrewdly to discount the natural duration of literary measles, to worry neither about Freudian "escapes" nor the future of art, and to be content with any possible visualization of all that lies outside of young egoism and zest.

If the mature woman found occasion to remind herself that even maturity has some rights, and that among these rights is that of not being too responsible as to the younger, she would be aiding all intellectual causes. The sureness of the young man is no more sure than that of the young woman, and in both the sureness is part of their panoply. The editing by life will bring its damage and its benefits to both. To be cheated of having been sure is to have lost a great lift and a great corrective. The sure, old and young, all have the same destiny—to be undeceived. The moral is to keep on being sure. All sureness cannot have genius, but all genius must have sureness. Sometimes it is called faith, and faith should begin at home in the individual mind.

As for any control of the rituals or the avenues of expression, I do not believe that either sex or years can give security against competition. If there is to be what Mrs. Austin nominates as "a genuine woman culture," I believe that women will never be able to hold it for their own. It will elope with man culture. It will thereby meet all the natural chances of incompatibility, facing here as elsewhere the fundamental complexity of adjustment that preserves life from sameness and art from ossification.

THE PRODUCER

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WHEN Lamb confessed that he was "sentimentally disposed to harmony, but organically incapable of a tune," he was expressing a contradiction of will and faculty such as I recognize as affecting my excursions into economics.

For example, I have been frequently bewildered by the philosophy of Single Tax. I find many occasions to like Single-Taxers. I have been fascinated by the picture they draw of conditions that will prevail when Single Tax is in operation. But despite a suspicion of inadequacy in my own reasoning—a suspicion emphasized by many a blunder—I continue to question the logic of Single Tax. I keep on seeing tax not as expressing a need to regulate or rebuke, but simply as expressing a need for the money. I keep on seeing basic land taxes as general club dues. I see supplementary property taxes as a corollary of property protection and of various phases of property privilege. I see the club member who uses the billiard-room implements as paying a special fee. The land doesn't need a fire department,

a plumbing inspector, or a school superintendent. A skyscraping apartment building holding fifty families asks more service and more implements than the mere land. In that proportion the house committee called the government asks more money. If the club has a very expensive lawsuit—call it a war—the club treasurer may insist on a special assessment, not because you are a guilty member, but because once more he simply needs the money. And so on. You may know how these can't-see-Single-Tax people think. At some point I must be wrong. That is inevitable—even if I am right. But I don't know just where. Like most other people in the same situation, I *think* I am open-minded, yet I may be shut-minded at the very point where conviction might get through.

I illustrate the same obscurity as to the preachment that "all wealth comes from the land." I see all life as deriving its physical nourishment from the land (and the air and sunlight), and I am assured that all material things are derived from the land, but the scientific definitions of wealth that name land and labor as the producers of wealth leave me groping. The Thinker's part in the partnership seems to be silent, but it seems to me to be real. I see the production of wealth in the union of raw material, physical effort and the

Idea. In primitive production the laborer may embody the idea, and the partnership may be that much simpler. But obviously all production is not so simple as that. A field of corn may be raised on elemental partnership terms, but a steamship or a printing press or a wireless telephone system is another matter. I want to make room for a Fulton, an Edison, and a Wright in the partnership, as well as for a Galileo, a Columbus, and a Pasteur. Though I be held to the fixed definition of wealth, and to all of Karl Marx's "socially necessary" implications, I still feel that there should be room for Marx himself; that wealth is derived also from the man who tells where and how to produce it and where and how to distribute it. I still feel that ideas are the foremost of all factors in production, that ideas themselves are a product.

For this reason I continue, and in all admiration for the brilliant scholar who laid down these doctrines of the "socially necessary," and for the earnestness of his modern disciples, to be profoundly perplexed by the uses of that word "producer." Though "capital" were banished and "exploiters" forever removed, it would yet remain true that ideas are dominant; it would yet remain true that the idea of the locomotive is as essential as the steel or the "labor force" of the steam fitter. Even if

Marx's materialistic conceptions were accepted in full, it would yet remain true that the interpreter of these conceptions and the authors of new conceptions would be producers of the highest importance.

Though we must accept the word wealth as of fixed materialistic meaning, there must be recognition of that concurrent factor for which many names have been hazarded, but which, because it is imponderable and seldom can be made to fit the true wealth definition by having an exchange price, floats cloudily in the imagination of a practical world. To forget ideas is like forgetting the sun. Explaining or developing the earth without considering the sun would parallel the stupidity of explaining or developing a civilization without considering ideas—without considering the dominant and determining factor.

The greatest producers, then, have been the greatest "idea men." A few of these idea men have been named by history. Sometimes they have laid aside a hoe or cobbler's awl; sometimes they have laid aside the tools of a carpenter—stopped creating and distributing things to create and distribute ideas. Sometimes thay have had a glory. Sometimes they have had a Golgotha.

Yet the sad thing is not the situation with which I have fumbled, and through which my

own technical ignorance of economics must shine with a clearness that makes apology superfluous, but the far profounder neglect of producers for which we cannot trace responsibility to any Marxian doctrine. "*Das Kapital*" and its interpreters have no monopoly of materialistic conceptions or materialistic conduct.

It is a trite lament, but in the midst of a world that is pretty much as it always has been, yet has learned to be glib in slogans, I see something ironic in the pretense that the existing antithesis to a radicalism that insists upon the material must be a conservatism that insists upon the spiritual. As a joke the pretense is transparent enough. The most preposterous situation in the modern world is of sentimental "materialists," on the one hand, and of sordid "idealists," on the other. Most of the world belongs to the reactionaries and the inert, and most of the world is deplorably indifferent toward its greatest producers.

I am thinking at the moment particularly of those idea men who cannot quickly be translated into material articles of exchange, and who do not appeal to the cupidities of any camp. I am thinking of producers of beauty —beauty in the art of living, beauty in the expression of the individual and his relationships, beauty in the kindling factors, beauty in sheer emotion and dreams. I am thinking of

Beethovens who did not catch the ear of their time, of low-born Da Vincis who did not find royal or other protectors, of Shakespeares who happened in the wrong place at the wrong season. I am thinking of the strugglers of our own day who look out upon a wonderfully practical world, choked with "wealth," stifling with conveniences, busy with everything but beauty that doesn't pay. I see an old man in a studio, grinning sarcastically and exclaiming, "They sit up nights trying to forget artists!"

The real dividing line is not between producing marketable things upon a Marxian basis and producing business upon a "capitalistic" basis. The line runs between the material thing that is of the body and the immaterial thing that is of the spirit. "Old stuff," snaps Efficiency. "It has always been that way," mutter ghostly whispers from the pulpit, the paint box, and the inkwell.

GIVING AND TAKING

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EACH revolution furnishes a fresh proliferation of texts. Russia's cataclysm has outranked all predecessors in "talking points." The total of any revolution is measurable only by the impudence of a dreamer. Blundering deductions from the struggles of the soviet will go on spattering the pages of print. Yet only an opportunity to blunder is any opportunity at all.

Applied communism, simply as a thought, has set up a Terror wherever there are minds. The soviet, representing the supreme "show down," closed millions of mental doors with a slam. As a piece of literary tracery communism once was delightfully entertaining; rather more so than socialism. Socialism stood too near. It had begun to happen, and thus to be annoying. Communism had the beauty of remoteness. If people wanted to paint it they were as free as if they wanted to paint heaven. A Brook Farm, for example, where all were to share alike, without any inequality of privilege or reward, and where all were under equal obligation as to the plow and the dishes, was

a joyous detached spectacle, to be only mildly derided, and giving text to many charming dissertations. As real happenings, such puttering experiments were praised as much, and ignored as much, as courage or the golden rule.

When communism happened on a scale that took it out of the class of merely literary ideas or small-group enthusiasms, when it began to impinge and threaten, above all, when it began to appear as a device that cost something, the situation changed vastly indeed. Quite suddenly, thinking about communism, and especially speaking about it, became an extraordinarily important matter. It could become a matter of going to jail. A new innocence like Mr. Howells's *A Traveller from Altruria* might bring a clanking challenge, "What d'you mean Altruria?"

The discovery that communism can express not only a wish to give, but a wish to take, has been a sad shock. To yield to some one else the privilege of wearing a smock and living on nothing a year is one thing. It is, naturally, quite another to have some one requisition your spoons or move into your parlor. Most people are convinced that they are willing to give and take. But in each case they want to make their own choice. Having taken his billion, the multiman wants to give away some millions to suit himself. The right seems to

him inalienable. Our whole system predicates such a right. If we find ourselves taking rather largely, we are consoled by the thought that we can give, when the time comes, in just the right proportion. As with the young man who had great possessions, the peremptory challenge hurts. Giving up all is pretty as a privilege, or on paper. As a compulsion it is resented for its disrespect to initiative, and this is an era of loud homage to initiative.

Communism is effective as bringing sharply to a focus the fact that most of us want something for nothing. People who want everything for nothing may furnish contrast, but they cannot furnish acquittal to those who ask less. Nature seems to be responsible, as usual. She commits so many benevolences that a habit of expecting to get a good many things for no more trouble than that of picking them up has been corrupting. We pass laws and leave nature to take its course. It does, and the fruit can be bitter, because inertia and stupidity are as natural as energy and wit. If our diversity were not responsible for creating the problem called government, the picturesqueness of that diversity might have been more entertaining.

Communism accepts the dictum of science that everything must be paid for. The trouble is that it goes farther. It insists with an iron

finality not only that everything must be paid for, but that everything must be paid for by everybody. A "rider" like this can be appalling, especially when it slips money from under the word "pay" and leaves that word starkly to mean work.

If we could forget the unforgettable, and pass over communism's supplementary denial as to property, the insistence on universal participation would still stand out as fearful. We are so far from a mood of collective participation in anything whatever that even a scheme that could conclusively promise the getting of everything for nothing might not hope for a unanimous response. We should still have those who think it wrong to take anything without working for it, those who would complain about the methods of distribution, and those who hate anything that everybody else wants.

FOREIGNERS

FOREIGNERS

ALTHOUGH going abroad still is respectable and continues to be congenial to every proper theory of culture, foreigners persist in being offensive. It is to be gathered that when we go to the foreigners they are elevating, but that when they come to us they are degrading. Pascal thought that all the troubles of man come from his not knowing how to sit still. Perhaps this illuminates one of the vicious circles. The restless rich American who may spend a few millions in Europe is seldom accused of anything worse than inducing foreigners to believe that America has a Crœsus on every corner. The immediate effect of persuading the foreigner to come over for some of the same sort of money is likely to be dismissed as a joke until some foreigner starts back again to Europe carrying a stockingful, with the wicked purpose of spending it upon a hostage family in Naples. Such an outrage is so disturbing to our economic equilibrium that every hater of foreigners is incited to view

with a still larger alarm the whole matter of alien intrusion.

Not merely our economic equilibrium, but our social comfort is threatened by foreigners, particularly while they are fresh foreigners, before they have been stewed in the vat of nationalism. One who cannot feel the proper repugnance is often at a serious controversial disadvantage. It is an unforgivable awkwardness to indicate the fact that we're all imported, that the Pilgrim Fathers were foreigners to a man, that the people who contrived to establish this Republic were foreigners or sons of foreigners, and that if immigrants once represented the kind of pluck that gets out of one place to start over again in another, they may still be expressing something of the same quality. Evidently it is an impoliteness to wonder precisely when the foreigner stopped being new blood and began to be "scum." The club called the United States having chosen to limit its membership, and having a waiting list, the seized implication is of a right to insult the newer members.

Such a consideration might be open to rebuke for its sheer triteness if the recrudescence of antipathy had not given new point to the question. Evidently foreigners will not stop having foreignness. For one thing, they exhibit impudent expectations. They have been

credibly informed that this is a free country. Our old advertising seems to have permeated, and to have survived, embarrassingly, the new issues in which subtleties of emphasis are more difficult to translate. Then, again, foreigners breed. The impoliteness of fecundity is to be conveyed in due course. By the time the foreigner's foreignness begins to be decently obscured he gets the idea. But meanwhile much mischief has been done. Vulgarly large families happen before the refined sterilities of culture have fully exerted their influence. The foreigner may believe that the world belongs to those who can take hold of it and populate it; that if we can't have a census we can't have a history. He will find lip-stick ethics against him. Beauty-parlor morality will cut him dead. His children complete his education. They are quicker in assimilating modern theories. In the end he will read, with a knowingness quite hopefully cynical, the gorgeous fantasy of a Mr. Shaw promising that babies will be born without mothers. If at last he catches the new spirit he will perceive that mothers are *cliché*, a banality intolerable to futurism.

Much may be done with a foreigner, once he is recognized as unavoidable, but there is no blinking the fact that he can be shockingly deficient in humility. There is always the

chance that he will have ideas. He ought to know that his single duty is to be molded. Being only a foreigner, he should be meek, whereas he is often somewhat of a man, growling when he is hurt quite like more highly privileged native men. It may be hard to teach him that an absolutely finished American does not growl at all, that in suffering to be strong the finished American heckles not, neither does he do anything resentful implying unpleasant noise or conspicuousness. The primitives of an older civilization are acutely discordant to the sensitive sophistication of the younger. A visit is one thing; an indefinite stay is quite another. And when the incubus not only involves rearrangement of household ways, but has the effect of taking these rearrangements for granted, hospitality despairs.

The truth is, of course, that we are tired of being a young country. To have grown up is to wish to settle down. Settling down has a formula, and repeatedly changing the formula is too much like an irksome adventure. When we were new, one experiment looked much like any other. Now that we are beginning to feel the weight of a past, to be able at last to make a three-century gesture with an old-family arrogance, it becomes a downright nuisance to find a humanity that looks like poor relations knocking at the door.

FOREIGNERS

No. Foreigners will not do. They suggest promiscuity. "For thereby some have entertained angels unawares"—very good, to be sure, as a piece of sentiment, especially by way of justifying the laxity that let the angels slip in. But what proper patriot feels like gambling against a horde of odds? Be soft with foreigners and presently you will be talking internationalism. If you talk internationalism some one will call you a liberal. What then? Isaiah has said it. "The liberal deviseth liberal things." What more scathingly logical warning could the patriot give?

LEGS

LEGS

MUCH has been written about the power of words, yet it seems to remain for some authoritative person, some cool-headed, incorrigibly scientific and properly unemotional investigator, to fix before us the whole truth as to the relationship between words and life.

We say that words are things. The word as a weapon is quite within our familiar acceptance (Stevenson called the unanswerable compliment "a social bludgeon"); but the sheer ethics of words is still a vague matter. A thousand admonitions hint at definable responsibility. What one may say as distinct from what one may do, belongs to the earliest formulas of education. Statutes of the state, which tell us what we must not eat or drink, and what clothes we must not wear on our bodies, tell us what clothes of language we must not drape upon our thoughts.

There are endless suggestions of an objective hazard in words which should long ago have received better attention. One grows up in a nervous dread that a devastating syllable may

be spilled somewhere, like a trickle from an illicit bottle in a hand bag, and utterly ruin a hitherto well-safeguarded reputation. We may often see a kind of fright on the faces of a group, even the most casual social group, lest a wrong word may wreck the peace of the situation. There is no chance that a physical blow will be struck. The situation may be too polite to permit the suspicion that anyone totes a gun, but everyone knows that a concealed vocal weapon can be deadly beyond estimate. The crippling constraint, the fearful negative force of the effort not to say something, might well seem disproportionate if we forget the explosive potency of this blessed thing we call language.

The Italians have a saying that "deeds are male, words are female," but Shakespeare noted that "'t's a kind of deed to say well"; and if it is a kind of deed to say well, it is a kind of deed to say ill. How definitely every word is a deed we no longer debate. It might reasonably be contended that if words are female, Kipling is again reinforced. A shrewd Scottish philosopher was willing to say that "the inventor of the most barbarous term may thus have an influence on mankind more important than all which the most illustrious conqueror could effect by a long life of fatigue and anxiety, and peril, and guilt."

No wonder, then, that the stalwarts in language's Loyal Legion have stood alert for offenders. If a hurled word bomb may change the course of history, naturally every caretaker has a duty.

Doubtless there are some words which, though they have managed to be born, are irrevocably exiled, if not outcast. Their euphemistic ambassadors are permitted to mingle; they themselves seem forever shut out. These are often simply primary words, the least common denominators. Primary words can have a naked terribleness. This is not a naked world, and we do not like such words around. Often ostracized words are not only elemental, but hopelessly vulgar. Even man to man they are never mentioned. The idea behind the word may be circuitously named, but it is established that while the idea is freely thinkable, the stark term itself has an inherent repulsiveness and must never be breathed.

Evidently, however, certain words which have been held in abeyance, or quite muffled, like certain civilities in the case of a person under a cloud or open to suspicion, await a changed acceptance in the matter of the idea. I recall what seemed to be the first speaking of "damn" on the American stage. Most of the auditors appeared to be shocked. Apparently the shock was agreeable in most instances.

This was not to be measured by the almost unanimous laugh. The laugh answers before conscience. Taste often rebukes participation. Yet it was possible to feel that the incident was accepted as refreshing, or as subject to some cordiality of consideration. At that time "damn" in print was always "d——n." Even the devil did not have his due. He was "d——l" in all respectable secular print, and, by a perhaps inevitable corollary, "h——l" was decently censored. There was, by the way, a quandary for one who read aloud: a dash cannot be vocalized. "Dash it," was a quaintness of early print. There is a whole literature of euphemistic expletives, as well as a strange iteration of subterfuges in actual profanity, many of which seem to have a permanent life. The modern realist may well regard with amazement the ingenuity with which literature has conveyed an effect of reality, even in rough talk, without using the literal terms. Stevenson, for example, though interpreting in *Treasure Island* the flavor of the most coarse-spoken class in the world, if we except the level of the *apaches*, could write a whole story without real cuss words and leave no feeling of artifice or unreality—at least he did not at the period of my first reading.

The ultimate word has often had to wait on the doorstep long after its idea was granted

admittance. Thus the word "sex" was under a ban until the open discussion of sex had become a commonplace. The *index expurgatorius* of a proper periodical or newspaper abided, as usual, the established example of other print. Sex might be expounded, but the word "sex" had in itself almost a libidinous sound, which was sternly reprehended. Not until after Freud did the complex receive the completely extenuating stroke.

The astonishing character of an inhibition is often unfolded to us by the realization of its removal. Sometimes the removal is spectacular; sometimes it follows the simple loosenings of an evolution. I find at hand, in the pages of a distinguished magazine, a paper on "Old Age" in which a retired gentleman candidly and charmingly discusses his outlook on past and present. It is here that I come upon this passage: "I love the theater, but have a new horror of front rows, especially if there are 'legs' in the show; for, alas! I am baldheaded." "Legs," even quoted legs—and quotation marks are a kind of fig leaf for a word that is only by way of being wholly permissible—could not possibly have been written thirty years ago with any such connotation or uttered in any such company. The leg has been in a situation not quite identical with that of the Fiji Islander who is, we are told by Edward

Clodd, not permitted to mention his own name. It has been more in the situation of the Kwakjuti Indian, who can pawn his name, and who for the term of the pawning has to take another name or be anonymous. Hypocrisy has held the pawn ticket for "leg."

There may be a more grotesque instance in linguistic psychology (I defer to the Max Müllers), but at the moment I can think of nothing so awkward, so shamefaced, so indicative as the entrance of this term. To see it come, not as brazen, not with any lusty swank, but with a skulking self-consciousness that still gives its manner a culprit effect, is to find fresh humor in humanity's passion for little troubles. We say that language is the clothing of thought. We admit that clothing, after sheltering and concealing, may have communicatory expression. We wake up to find that the clothing of thought has deliberately chosen to supplement its primary functions by adopting a ball and chain to retard each foot, putting bird bones in the lobes of the ears, adding ghastly nostril distenders and some equivalent torture for the lower lip. In aggravation, even the shedding of one of these encumbrances leaves us with a kind of guilty awkwardness, a serf-souled tendency to fumble with our freedom. Since we invented our own shackles and fastened them on, liberty brings a strange mixture of relief and chagrin.

For a person still living who may have been born anywhere between haircloth sofas and crayon portraits it is true that a refusal to say "legs" was mitigated by the fact that it had long been a sinful impoliteness to think them. The convention that "the Queen of Spain has no legs" had fastened itself upon civilized usage. But for that convention there could have been nothing astonishing enough to claim special attention in a certain narrative by the author of the *Lives of the Berkeleys*, who, when he was a newly imported page to Queen Elizabeth, was one day called to account for his awkward manner of "making a leg" in the courtesy, and the queen lifted her garments calf high "that I might the better observe the grace of drawing back the foot and bowing of the knee." This recital may or may not prove that Queen Elizabeth differed from the Queen of Spain, but it once more calls attention to the fact that even, and perhaps especially, a queen can never be sure when she is making history.

Of literature it may be said that, in general, it conformed to the convention we are considering. Even the word, without awkward connotations, was somehow taboo. This may account for the fact that, though Solomon's Song sings that "his legs are as pillars of marble," my Oxford Concordance refuses to index the item. Neither does it participate in

the isolated indelicacy of Isaiah when he scolds women about "bonnets and ornaments of the legs." In the main, poets have exhibited an amazing caution. Suckling's phrase in the "Ballad upon a Wedding," "her feet beneath her petticoat," expressed the nice sense of limitation. Her petticoat—that set the boundaries of license. How daintily Herrick refers to the circumstance that

> Her pretty feet, like snails, did creep
> A little out!

Feet patter with a joyous liberty through ten thousand verses. When a lifted skirt issued challenge to an abandoned imagination, an ankle was revealed. Without the fortunate intervention of that word "ankle," literature, and perhaps thereby legislatures, would have had to say "leg" two centuries sooner. As it happened, "ankle" was there for purposes of rhapsody and rebuke, and "the charms her downcast modesty concealed" standardized concealment in the proper length and proper management of the skirt.

In a sane world modesty will always be at a premium. That expressed modesty is a convention, that it is not as immutable as arithmetic and must constantly undergo change in expression though its essence remain always the same, is as freshly incredible to the civil-

ized as to the savage. Each age has a new code, and every code must be definite, for it is translating definite implications. Paul, who was, indeed, no feminist, yet who well expressed the man spirit of his time, was not content to declare that he would not suffer women to preach, and that they were to "be in silence." He was not content to admonish women in general terms that they must "adorn themselves in modest apparel." He specified that a woman must not braid her hair. He was quite right, since in his time braided hair had an unpleasant significance. It is significance that should determine the gestures of modesty. To accuse Paul of narrowness is to overlook his environment. It will be said, and it has been said often enough, that men are always finding excuse in their environment. Critics of Paul have complained, even in the pulpit, that no stretch of the principle justified him in concluding, as between Adam and Eve, that Eve was the transgressor, and that the conclusion marks him forever as a woman hater. Without dignifying the complaint, it may be pointed out that no sincere preacher of feminine modesty can be wholly a woman hater. We have no more right to accuse Paul of being a woman hater than to accuse Charles Lamb of being a misogynist because he thought Milton's Adam and Eve behaved too much like married people.

Modesty, then, and its interpretations are beginning factors in the fate of our word. When that roysterer Fielding says, "Thy modesty's a candle to thy merit," he was simply acknowledging that every quality has its sign, and sooner or later insists upon its sign. We carry around an idea by the shawl strap of its symbol. An idea that isn't thus made portable is likely to be neglected. The fixed idea of the properly invisible assisted the idea of the properly inaudible, and sham modesty could not discredit the notion. When one of the pupils of Socrates came in a ragged garment to parade his humility, Socrates remarked, dryly, "I see thy vanity through the holes in thy coat." The "vamps" of history have always made the most of concealment. It has long been notorious that drapery can become the subtlest implement of the frivolous and the depraved.

Geography has played its whimsical part. The immodesty of one land has been quite within the modesty of another. The corsage of Victoria's iron-clad regulation, with no regard for unfortunate shoulder blades or wattles, was scandalous in Tokyo; yet Victorian bathing suits were funny beyond understanding to a Japanese lady who wore no sea clothes at all. The grammar of modesty has always been, as General Hancock calamitously described the tariff, a "local issue"; so that the

Queen of Spain, who had no legs, inevitably did not ride a bicycle.

It was the bicycle, by the way, that began a real revolution in women's dress. Dr. Mary Walker's trousers left a world of women wholly unconvinced. Wheels made shortened skirts undebatable, and shortened skirts made anatomy undebatable. If this change did not always increase reverence for the literal facts of anatomy, if it proved that gallantry had often, if not generally, gone farther in assumptions of beauty than the facts warranted, it helped to sweep away a hypocrisy which reverence learned not to need and modesty learned to ignore. This coming into collision of mechanism and modesty had, in fact, extraordinary evolutionary consequences. The athletic girl, a type older than Greece, was emancipated from encumbering devices. What a girl could and could not do had been settled in a huge percentage of instances by the length of her skirts. Her physical needs and rights as a human creature had been circumscribed by a lying hem. She could not throw a ball scientifically because her clavicle was too short, but she could dance better than a man when she had a fair chance. Her wish and her need to dance freely were permitted expression mostly on the stage. Social dancing, perhaps as confessing, closely and untheatrically, that she

really must have legs, always met its frowns. Byron insulted the waltz; but then, he had a bad foot. Thackeray was violently in opposition. "A man who loves dancing," he said, "may be set down as an ass; and the fashion is gradually going out with the increasing good sense of the age." Oddly, it was the irascible bachelor Nietzsche who proclaimed dancing as "the highest symbol of perfected human activity."

During the long period when the stage might make its confessions, but normal life was held to rigid concealments and subterfuges, the joke reached its cowardly limit, and the poor word had the effect of sending decency, as in the presence of a hunted mouse, to the vantage of a chair or table, with skirts gathered against an awful possibility. The evasion entailed immense difficulties of description. A man could break a leg, but a woman could break only a limb, and since this designation, though decent, was indefinite, she was permitted to break a "lower limb." No ribaldry could seem to shame the false shame. The joke-smith's fun about the spinsters who draped the naked "limbs" of the piano was looked upon as at best only illustrating how levity can grimace in the presence of serious things. The timid could not be jested out of their shelter. Hypocrisy was darkest just before the dawn.

LEGS

I remember an early evening on a certain Western train that had stopped for the twentieth time in an exhausting effort to butt its head through a snowstorm. We were still eighteen miles or so from the city in which I was to lecture, and every pause plainly lessened the chance that my audience, if there should happen to be one on such a night, would have the high pleasure of hearing what it came for. In the seat beside me was a quiet girl who had begun to eat her supper out of a package. By various signs, across-the-car exclamations and visits, I came to understand that she was a member of a theatrical company. At last her question as to my opinion of the hazard, seeing how late it already was, made it plain that a stage awaited her, as a lyceum platform awaited me. Her anxiety did not seem to equal mine, but she had a curiosity as of one who had been through many perils and retained a normal sense of gambling chances, and the curiosity, shining through a pretty demureness, made me wish that I might have had a conviction one way or the other. Yet I had nothing to offer. I only hoped. And it came about that I asked her the name of the play in which she was to appear.

"Oh, it isn't a play," she answered through the sandwich; "it's only a leg show."

The "leg show" of those days expressed the

sharp differentiation between the prosaic and the spectacular. That lower limbs are still visible on the stage the remark of our retired friend sufficiently attests, but they are no longer called "leg shows." The leg is no longer a specialized lure, or at all events not one to be so labeled, for the plain reason that the utter familiarity of a fashion has, perhaps for all time (though I suppose we should not be too sure of that), robbed mischievous frivolity as well as ingenious prurience of its excuse. Prurience was able to trade on a hypocrisy. With the hypocrisy in flight, the game lost flavor. You can't tease a concealment that has stopped concealing. You can't steal that which is freely yielded. Fashion takes all satisfaction from an evil blow by turning the other leg.

At the hour of this writing the mode has made its mark at the knee. Since fluctuation belongs to the essence of fashion, and since fashion cannot escape the dilemma of the irreducible minimum, the barometer of change is certain to show a fall. But, to whatever final effect, the intricate topography of exposure sets a new line. The leg complex has undergone an extraordinary jolt. A new psychology must be drafted. In ways which no theory could have suspected, a bitterly debated revolution in dress has made it necessary to consider from new angles questions that are not merely artis-

tic and not merely whimsical. If it is true that in abandoning concealments women have abandoned any of their real modesty, the event has been lamentable indeed. If it is true that in abandoning these concealments women have only kicked off archaic shackles, and with them various incrusted coquetries invented in a man-made world, there is nothing to weep about but the hazards of weather. If the attitude of men is to be a vital consideration, it will be important to find out whether men have lost by the change any real respect for women, have experienced any lowered impulses either of reverence or of response, or have lost nothing but a sense of "leg-show" mystery that once was so fertile and foolish in the drama of sex.

Both sides of the contention have been vociferously presented. One side has gone so far as to imply that woman has been utterly abased. The other has gone so far as to insist that at last she has been utterly liberated, that by a happy synchronization she is at the same hour both physically and civically free. There is, I trust, nothing wrong in my standing aside from the affray, or in my momentary absorption by the spectacle of the mere word, sheepishly alone in its new liberty.

Yet I venture to remark that women themselves seem likely to settle the whole question in their own way. A deeper student of such

matters reinforces me. Havelock Ellis gives the weight of his profound analysis to the statement that women, once they acquire the privilege, are more direct than men. Ellis has found that women not only think more directly, but have, when they wish to have it, a more direct way of getting their thought said. He mentions, for instance, that Parisian lawyers have discovered that women can explain things better, and that these lawyers say to their working-class clients, "Send me your wife." How complicated such study is we may discover in Ellis's revelation that, nevertheless, women are preternaturally clever in "attaining results by ruses." This trait is, we are told, "so habitual among women that, as Lombroso and Ferrero remark, in women deception is 'almost physiological.'" Surely now you forgive me for standing aside. If women think more directly, yet are addicted to ruses, if their thought is straight and their actions devious, it would be absurd for a man to decide that she is wrong in what she is doing when it is deeply impossible that he should know what she *is* doing. One thing is certain: she has a sense of humor in the matter of clothes that has been denied to men. It is not alone the failure in man's sense of humor that induces him to think she is dressing solely for him. That blunder has a remoter explanation. I suspect

that no man is fitted to give this explanation in full. Evidently there must be a duality in many explanations, and sex truth must have bi-logic as well as the biologic. Woman's understanding with her own sex has been much underrated. It has created vast areas of obscurity for men.

Even Havelock Ellis must only be guessing. He is ruthless and circumstantial. He seems to know. He diagrams mind and body with the same assurance. But how are we to judge whether, if he is possibly in error as to her mentality, he may not also be in error as to her anatomy? For I am compelled to admit that the archcritic finds one supreme fault with her structure. "This obliquity of the legs," he says, "is the most conspicuous æsthetic defect of the female form in the erect posture, while it unfits women for attitudes of energy, and compels them to run by alternate semicircular rotations of the legs." Would it be cynical to suspect that Ellis was influenced by "semicircular rotations" to believe that the get-what-she-wants instinct gave the mind of woman a circuitous facility? It may be that such a suspicion would be no more unscientific than to see in the present passionate interest of women in the matter of dressing legs and feet a corollary to their notorious preference for a happy ending.

It is more significant to note that in future no commentator in this field can occupy the position of one privileged to analyze the obscure. The unhampered mind of woman has chosen to acquire an unhampered and a describable body. It does not matter that some one might indicate the describable body as last to be acquired, and draw out any frippery of thesis from this case. It does not matter how the quarrel may be decided as to the immediate reaction upon men. Without considering fashion extremists, who are a quite negligible minority for the use of cartoonists, women have taken one practical means of leaving the malice or mischief or sentimentalism of men no leg to stand on.

THE DESK

THE DESK

IT was gaunt and stiff when closed, but when you lowered the front, which thus became the writing surface, it looked less grim. It then began to be a desk. Moreover, the uncovering of its compartments gave it features and an intelligent mien. Probably it was made of cherry. This was to be guessed not by the general surface, which had reached a venerable blackness, but by the revealed flesh of the wood in a series of knifed notches from which one might deduce pangs of parturition, or a contemplative exuberance. In general the desk was prim, austere, shakily old; the notches touched it with youth. The young tricks of the forgotten blade humanized the thing wonderfully, removed a completeness of awe which otherwise might not have been escaped; for I was told at the beginning that it was Walt Whitman's desk.

One person who might have been the absolutely verifying authority as to the desk's ancestry had just died, full of years and exquisite secrets. Yet there were others, old

enough to have profound knowledge, who transmitted the tradition with the effect of accepted fact. Not as if it were a noteworthy fact; there were plenty other Whitman tokens and impresses—books he had thumbed and penciled, one copy of *Leaves of Grass*, inscribed to an office mate, several old prints with his annotations—and signs of him were quite taken for granted in that old newspaper shop near the Williamsburg ferry. The circumstance that this was Whitman's desk acquired an attention as definite yet as casual as the desk itself.

In those days I was the youngest writer on the staff of the Brooklyn *Times* (which hated to be called the *Williamsburg Times* because Williamsburg, having wedded Brooklyn, was always offended by use of its maiden name) and I was still susceptible to the seductions of souvenirs. It had, in fact, been suggested, in view of my fascinated interest, that I might care to take the thing home, and that this privilege might be negotiated by the simple expedient of paying for a modern substitute. There were several objections to such a step. First, I hadn't the money; second, the desk was decrepit and in no respect of beauty to be regarded as the sort of thing one could impose at home without domestic complications; and, third, so to make the affair one of sordid trans-

action (transactions always look sordid when you haven't the money) without authentication, looked like a sentimentalism that would lack the important moral support of certain onlookers who had preserved an attitude of neutrality as to the whole question.

But when, in natural succession, the desk at last fell to my use, I determined upon a practical step. This was after conference with the luminaries of our group. Bennett Graham Burleigh, of whom, as a war correspondent, England was in later years to hear much, wondered what I wanted with "the damned old thing," but in general the response to my consultations was cordial, if sometimes mystified. That was an interesting group—Irving Bacheller; Herbert Gunnison; John Langdon Heaton; Charles Skinner (who wrote *With Feet to the Earth* and had more sky in him than any man I ever knew); John Alden, nephew of Henry Mills Alden of Harper's; William H. Maxwell (for so many years New York's Superintendent of Schools); William Churchill, acquaintance of Stevenson and soon to be consul-general at Samoa; a third "Bill," William MacDonald Wood, one of the shrewdest editorial writers of his time, and that prince of reporters, "Jim" Wood; Elbridge Brooks, who had written so many volumes that we could not fail to regard him as essentially

the literary member; and not a few other men and women who were afterward to be heard from. Since it was impossible (as the varied wisdom of this assemblage agreed) to summon Walt to the desk, he being then seventy-two, enfeebled, and so harshly remote as Camden, New Jersey; and since transporting the desk presented a difficulty quite equal to that of buying a substitute, why not photograph the relic and submit the document to the poet himself? Being then in possession of one of the first hand cameras yet devised, I made my own pictorial report of the desk and shipped the picture, with an eloquent appeal, to Camden.

The answer came on a square sheet of ripe buff paper, headed by a printed extract from the Boston *Transcript* of May 7, 1891—evidently now in the mail for perhaps the first time, since the letter itself was dated May 12th. The printed extract read:

> . . . The Epictetus saying, as given by Walt Whitman in his own quite dilapidated physical case, is, "a little spark of soul dragging a great lummux of corpse-body clumsily to and fro around."

Quite abruptly my failure was then revealed in these terms:

> Couldn't remember distinctly enough to authenticate the desk (the pict: hereby returned as your note seems

to involve)—but I know I had a good time in the *Times* —& heartily send my best respects & love to the boys one & all now there—I send my last photo: Tack it up if you like on the wall you all most congregate.

WALT WHITMAN.

The last of authentic voices had spoken. He who had written,

Perhaps soon, some day or night while I am singing,
my voice will suddenly cease,

could no longer be debated as a possible witness. At a stroke the quaint tradition was crippled. It was not obliterated; strangely, we all continued to believe more stubbornly than ever that it *was* Walt Whitman's desk. The very conscientiousness of the old man's pause (after half a century) seemed to rebuke not the tradition, but doubt itself. Yet something beautiful in my dreams about the desk seemed to have suffered a hurt. And then, by an irony, in the following year the thing fell apart. I remember the huddle of the fragments in a corner. It had dissolved, as you might say, by the failure of a supporting faith. Or was it that, at almost the same time, the wild voice had "suddenly ceased"?

THE CAMERA

THE CAMERA

LAFCADIO HEARN'S Japanese wife puts the case crisply: "He disliked liars, abuse of the weak, Prince Albert coats, white shirts, and the city of New York."

I cannot recall those days in the despised city without consciousness of this plaintive echo. If, after the event, Hearn disliked New York, something of the invidious is removed by the revelation of prejudices that led to his burying himself at Matsué. He wanted his Japan as undiluted as he could get it. All that had gone before was shut out.

When I saw him, Hearn was yet to find his peace. He had yet to be enthralled by the mountain pigeons at Kitabori and to read *kwaidan* in the shimmer of lotus ponds. I am here making note of a time when his restless detachment caught me as a singular and memorable appearance.

I go back to that strange crib in which Henry Mills Alden edited *Harper's Magazine*, a pinched place radiant with Alden. I hear Alden tell me that I know all that is to be

known about cameras, and will I do a great service for him and a certain Lafcadio Hearn, who wishes once more to go forth into the world, this time with one of the new cameras without legs? Hearn, I am to understand, is an odd chap, decidedly peculiar, in fact. It is essential that he should be able to make pictures on his travels. If I might not only choose the camera, but expound, with the necessary subtlety, the disposition of the thing, so that Hearn might be reconciled to it—if I might bring the two together, as it were—the implication is that the accomplishment will constitute a benevolence and a strategic triumph for which gratitude shall not be wanting.

It was thus that I came to the meetings with Hearn in the turmoil of New York, and to know how much of apprehension could be kindled by a piece of mechanism that is now as familiar as a jackknife. Evidently there was an unspoken and an unwritten interval in which Hearn debated the undertaking as something momentous. I found vestiges of this interval in later fragmentary confessions. At last came the first letter, as in a kind of desperation:

I have made up my mind about the camera, and have only a few more days to stay in N. York,—so that, if

you can spare the time either this afternoon or to-morrow morning, I will avail myself of your very kind offer by asking you to meet me at Mr. Alden's office.

During the whole of that excursion to the camera shop and the time of selection, analysis, and demonstration, his dismay seemed to increase, though this was to be translated mostly from the silences. He asked and listened. We returned again and again to elemental considerations. And again he receded. A quaint Martian, imperfectly contacting our civilization, listening, revolving our manifestations, and having constant difficulty in keeping his sense of touch with the immediate thing, might have given some such impression.

Hearn was, indeed, profoundly mysterious to me. There was something behind his drabness that puzzled and often disquieted one who met him. It was as if he did not belong with the rest of us. He was utterly simple, yet his simplicity appeared as of one facet in an exotic complexity. His outward queerness was, of course, chiefly due to his eyes, of which I had the feeling that he was in some way tortured by them. The sign was not merely in the pupil or iris, but in the slant of the brows and the markings of the outer muscles that gave him, at an unfavorable angle, an effect of blight, while it added something immensely

constrained or tentative in every movement or word.

A truth of which first acquaintance could give one no more than a suspicion was that he was extraordinarily sensitive, sensitive quite beyond any usual meaning of that term. I am now sure that he guarded himself, by habit, yet with little dexterity, against the hazards growing out of this susceptibility as well as against the impulses that were ever ready to swing him aside. I am sure that more than once he was prompted to chuck the camera expedient altogether. One circumstance would have been a potent deterrent. The new travel articles were conditioned upon pictures. He would have seen his dream of a vaster adventure as involving civility toward this exacting companion. He was, indeed, forced to make terms with it, and there was the chance that he would feel that he was forced to make terms with *me*. Was I not the instrument by which he was acquiring a shackling incubus?

I recall vividly the look into the recesses of the camera and his plaintive summing up of the crisis, "There are so many things to remember!"

This was before the day of films, and there were more things to remember than remained to be thought of in later days. Yet no camera can be a respecter of absent-mindedness.

There is the story of President Cleveland, who, on a fishing trip with Joseph Jefferson, pressed the button of his kodak throughout a whole day without ever turning the film.

In the end Hearn went away with his "detective"—which is what the first hand cameras were called—and I did not hear from him for many months. It was after I had sent him a copy of Major Pond's circular announcing my picture-lecture, "Ourselves as Others See Us," that he wrote from Philadelphia:

> I feel the greatest possible interest in your undertaking. The circular is a beautiful revelation to me, and I hope if you ever conclude to publish a book on the subject, illustrated in the delightful manner suggested by that circular, you will let me know,—wherever I may be. . . .
>
> I fear I am an absolute failure in the use of the Detective, but I am not quite sure, because I could not get plates enough to spoil. During my stay in the West Indies communication was cut off by quarantine, & I could procure no material for love or money. I feel however that the camera is a superb success as an instrument; but as far as I have been able to learn there are few amateurs capable of thoroughly mastering it. Practice and judgment are required in an extraordinary degree.

"In the spring of the twenty-third year of Meiji" (1891) Hearn reached Matsué. I had one letter from Kobé, a brief line of inquiry

as to an address. My camera pupil had slipped over the horizon into his dream country. He had found his Place, his companion, his voices that said *Papa-san*. He had found the beauty that could be for him an eternal shrine and wonder. His passion for Japan was one of those love affairs that last.

THE ELEVEN O'CLOCK

THAT curious group in the studio of William M. Chase will perhaps excuse a further allusion to the camera.

I had been showing Chase, with an amateur's emotions, negatives gathered for the picture-talk on "Ourselves as Others See Us," that first ambitious exploitation for the screen of a photography that was then surprising simply because it was "instantaneous." Chase himself had given cordial help, through negatives of his own, and by suggestion as to the work of others. His studio at that time was one of the most noteworthy in America. Probably it was the most picturesque on this side of the water, most romantically suggestive of the atelier tradition. You found it on the left as you groped into the brownish foyer of the Tenth Street studio building, and you heard the murmur of the harp on the door when Chase was bidding you enter. The smaller room into which you first came was charmingly littered with colorful things, in itself a bit of chromatic magic. But the real

wonder lay in the larger, high-ceilinged room beyond, where hanging rugs, a subtle sheen in draperies, an Oriental significance in corner detail, and flashes of painted poetry combined to spell studio in the end-of-the-century terms. In such terms the place was romantic; and it seemed to be the inevitable background to Chase. However they might quarrel upon other points, the critics yielded a unanimity as to Chase's mastery in color, and it was unthinkable that in placing a bit of copper or bronze, in flinging any decorative trophy, or in making room for the processes of mere work he should by any chance fail of the color chord or evoke other than a fascinating dissonance.

In the midst of this scene Chase could seem as confirmatory of tradition as anything in his surroundings. He reminded one of Paris. Certain of his gestures, particularly in these middle years, were curiously and spontaneously French. A Latin quickness gave animation to his native enthusiasm; yet he was always the American, and always Chase, as markedly individual as his friend Whistler.

Suddenly, in the course of our talk, Chase flung out his arms.

"I have it!" he exclaimed. "Whistler did his Ten o'Clocks. You shall go him one better. You shall give an Eleven o'Clock."

Perhaps I looked dismayed. At all events,

he had a torrential explanation aimed to persuade me. There was a pending first night of the Society of American Artists. After the reception he would bring the "crowd" down to the studio and I should set up my screen and perform. "They have no idea," said Chase, "of the charm of these photographic records of life. There are bully things there. They know you as a critic. Let them see you and hear you as an artist. They will be amazed at what they shall see. And they will listen with tremendous interest."

Chase was wrong about the listening; at least that was my impression in the midst of the experiment. The crowd came. A gathering so distinguished could scarcely have been accomplished except by an expedient such as Chase had devised. The turning off of the lights, essential to the functioning of the stereopticon, happened mercifully, for I was appalled by the presence of the celebrities whose work I had had the impudence to appraise in print, and who now had me in their hands. La Farge, Weir, Wiles, Thayer, Beckwith, Robert Blum, Champney, Twachtman, J. G. Brown, George Innes, Elihu Vedder, St. Gaudens, W. J. Baer—there was twoscore of them; and they did listen to my introduction, before the lights dimmed and the pictures began. After that the audience took charge

of the occasion. I think you would say that it was an appreciative audience, but the appreciation took an embarrassing form. A picture of New York bootblacks in action elicited a glad recognizing shout. "A perfect J. G. Brown!" A Park scene drew forth, "A Chase to the life!" "Ah! a Thayer!" was the quick comment upon a tenement Madonna. And when a street vista included one of New York's worst atrocities of sculpture there was a groaning voice to say, "Imagine how St. Gaudens feels!" Of course the comment went farther. Voices at the back fell into discussions as to composition. One spectator gave a despairing effect to the drawling remark: "No use. Nature *is* awful!"—then in another moment the tone changed sharply: "Ah! As Jimmy would say, Nature's looking up."

In other words, my audience had a good time. When I caught the pace, when I found my part in the orchestral effect, all went well enough, save that to be released occasionally to the solo became an acutely difficult matter. At the time it was natural to minimize the exclamations of astonishment and approval, but the total of recollection gives to these evidences a better place. There could be no real doubt as to the holding power of the pictures selected, and I came to realize how richly profitable that experience had been to the lec-

turer who lectured so little. How much we should get from audiences—of chastening and of cheer too—if their reactions were always audible!

My own interest in that collection of pictures, which was afterward amplified for the purposes of a talk on photography in its relations to art at the National Academy and elsewhere, lies in the fact that certain of its related groups led me to debate the possibility of writing a screen story and of casting and photographing it into pictorial drama. The artists were all but unanimous in the opinion that the thing couldn't be done. As one of them put it: "You know how stiff a deliberately made photographic group is. Well, imagine a succession of them!"

Nevertheless I went to work, "registering" the images so that the screen effect was of a "slow movie," though no such term was thought of at a time when film and full motion had yet to happen. The monologue in the dark related the fragments of conversation and all else that could not be told by the pictures. Among many descriptive terms, "picture play" met with the greatest favor. Thus "Miss Jerry," the first screen drama, came to be produced in 1894. Among all the early comments on that adventure (four plays cover a period of six years), one brings perhaps the

warmest surviving feeling, doubtless because of something in the vivid image of the man. I am thinking of the ejaculation of Dr. Edward Everett Hale: "Black, this idea of a play in pictures is so *inevitable* that I'm mortified to think I didn't invent it myself!"

COINCIDENCES

COINCIDENCES

THERE can be extraordinary sarcasms in coincidence. One night a thief made off with my overcoat from a restaurant. The restaurant was not of the sort in which one is admonished to be alert. Moreover, I had never been robbed of anything in my life. I was utterly without admonitory experience. Naturally, the incident made a rather profound impression. The weather happened to deepen that impression. It was within the hour that I happened to open my Bible to verify the location of the verse from which I took the title of a certain book. And in the verse immediately preceding I read, with an entirely new sense of their significance, these startling words: "Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments."

On a certain afternoon I was reading a book in a street car. The book was Julian Hawthorne's *The Great Bank Robbery*. Its picture of a beautiful, cultivated, and socially important woman who becomes fascinated by a

crook, and under the mesmeric influence of the infatuation actually steals the secret of a safe, set up a lively speculation in my mind. The story was supposed to be founded upon fact—really to transcribe the experiences of a known detective—and the psychology of the thing thus acquired more than merely a speculative interest. All the rest of the story might be true, or be a free transcription of fact, but could this woman be true? I lowered the book in that moment of mental wrestling with skepticism and became conscious that a girl in a greenish-blue dress sat diagonally opposite in the car. It occurred to me that she was very pretty, perhaps even beautiful, and that especially she had about her something exquisite, as of a fine breed, that stood out against the profane average of the public huddle. The truth is that I was awed and thrust quite into the mood of a deeper skepticism about the book. Could a girl like *that*, for example, do a coarse, unscrupulous thing, a criminal thing at the behest of any man or any emotion? It was incredible. Hawthorne's fiction began to look tawdry, like a trick to make a melodrama. I should have to say so in my review. Then the car came to a stop. The girl opposite arose. A man on the front platform got off. So did a man on the rear platform who had been standing beside the

conductor. Presently I saw that the girl was between them in the street, and when I glanced backward I became aware that the three figures disappeared into the Greene Avenue police station. In a state of disturbed curiosity I went to the conductor. The girl? That was Jenny Hansen. The coppers called her the queen of the shoplifters.

Again: And note that the scene is once more a public conveyance and that once more I am reviewing. Of course a reviewer should be wearing a velvet jacket and be seated in a large place, graciously quiet, and framed against the intrusions of mere life by towering barricades of books. Here, attuned and sheltered, the reviewer should measure the precise degree in which the print in hand synchronizes with Literature. But I was in the cross seat of an elevated train. In that day elevated trains were operated by steam, and this one was bowling along at what seemed to be a hastening rate. My book was Virginia Titcomb's *Mind Cure on a Material Basis*, then a comparatively new subject. I reached a paragraph in which there was speculation upon the ultimate power of thought and will to influence external things. Call it creative imagination, mediumistic projection, or the faith that moves mountains, this power, by whatever name, latent or limited, suggested

enormous potentialities. Yet with the most eager cordiality toward the theory one could not avoid bewilderment as to the boundaries. One might influence his own chemistry. This was already admitted. Would it be held that wholly external matter might, as in the Miracles, yield to the white heat of individual wish? Fancy, I said to myself, willing, willing fiercely and with a tremendous concentration, that this train, now midway of two stations, should come to an utter halt, that I, taking the train by the throat, as it were, should screech to it, "Stop!" At that instant (the instant is essential to my drama) the train *did* halt, with so complete a suddenness, with a sharpness so preposterously violent, that I was thrown forward against the seat in front, to the damage of my face. A child fell to the floor of the car. One or two women screamed in fright. For another instant, before there could be room for reason, I had the thrill of an absolutely apocalyptic confirmation, with a twinge that blended chagrin and awe. The world had, at a stroke, acquired a fearful, a prodigious instability. Nothing is too fantastic to last for a second. When I thrust my head out of the window (in company with a dozen others) I discovered that the engineer had quite peremptorily changed his mind and decided to

take water at a huge tank which hung about a hundred feet from the point where I had applied the mental brakes.

Others may have had profounder experience. These are my three perfect coincidences.

WHAT'S IN A PLACE?

WHAT'S IN A PLACE?

OF course, as a person born in New York City I cannot pretend to forget that there is something disqualifying about being native when one is still to be found in the place of his nativity. It is true that a born New-Yorker shares the common acquittal as to complicity in such a matter. Even those who admit that one might better have been born somewhere else do not go so far as to suggest that the hazard of being born in New York is one which he could have avoided, though facing the risk of ending where he began is remarked with an effect of indicating questionable taste. It does not avail that a born New-Yorker may have a wholesome sense of the sins he has inherited—perhaps even of those to which he has given nourishment. There is an American implication that being discovered where you were born violates a kind of code. It simply isn't done.

A sense of this affects me poignantly when I find myself at one of those dinners, so frequent

in New York, that celebrate some remote county of my own state or some noble other state of the Union. It is at one of these festivals that one realizes most sharply the imperativeness of unfolding and of being remarked in a region other than his birthplace. When I sit at a banqueting board, with a man beside me who is modest about everything but Missouri, and hear the orators extol the county or the state that produced them; when I hear those impassioned allusions to a sky that is bluer, grass that is greener, and water that is wetter than any other on God's fair footstool—I feel depressed and inferior. When I hear about the old swimming hole and realize that I had nothing but the Atlantic Ocean; when I must confess to myself that I never was chased by a constable, but only by a policeman; especially when it is borne in upon me that one cannot feel or say these things about a place when he is there, that only when he is properly somewhere else can he be permitted to express his natural emotions of native pride—I experience a sheepish pang. If I had gone forth or come forth like others; if I had heard the far call and had seen the beckoning finger; if that place-appeal to the imagination which constitutes so vital an element of adventure had not come from my own island—if I had not found romance where Adam found his, in the home

lot—I too might have enjoyed this birthright of a distant birthplace.

No apology is offered for the personal digression, not only because it sets forth a really important psychology, but because it seems to bear a relation to the matter here specifically in mind—namely, certain new (and very old) debates as to the native, the "characteristic," in American life. It might pay to pause for consideration of the migrating impulse as a factor in sociology. But that is another complex. It is essential to stick to the quarrel point. If you had been born in New York, and were still there, the quarrel point would hold you; the fact that New York, for example, is not "characteristic" enough, and that its failure to be characteristic is somehow mixed up with its failure to be original, would acquire for you, in the course of time, the interest of an accusatory revelation.

America was very young when it formed the habit of thinking about its "difference." There was no comfort for a visitor who did not admit, or proclaim, and then expound this difference. Being different became a preoccupation, sometimes a mania, often a business. The theory that we were essentially different introduced a heavy strain. Only being enormously busy could assure a continued difference. If being American was being different, then not being

different in any conspicuous or essential quality was not being American. You will see at a glance how intricate life could become under an obligation so insistent.

It is as when we say to the humorist that he must be not only as funny as before, but that to seem as funny he must be funnier than ever. American efficiency remarks very sternly to the youth that to do as well he must do better. We can't simply *stay* different. We must hustle, or when we are not looking our difference will have melted or dried up or stiffened or somehow ceased to be different.

Inevitably our difference moved westward, and then it seems to have begun, like the center of population, to roll back. Inevitably, too, this produced an uneven thickness in the difference. It was the paradox that in new spots it was thicker, as of something laid on with a dripping brush. And very early began the quarrel as to which places were entitled to be regarded as most American. The quarrel was not introduced by an outlander. It was our own affair. We always told the outlander about it when he came. This was necessary, because without information he was as likely as not, when he stepped ashore, to think he had landed in America.

"Sh-sh!" some one was sure to mutter to the outlander, with an admonishing sign.

"Don't make the mistake of thinking that *this* is America. The real America is westward. Wait awhile."

There was the possibility that the newcomer might assume that going westward as far as he could he should find the utmost America, and it became a kind of humiliation, having reached a delightfully sophisticated other coast, to discover that the realest America was somewhere in between—that he had walked over it without knowing, or had slept through it on a night train. Our visitors usually have been extremely polite. Most of them have shown a disposition to feel what they ought to feel; and it must often be a bewildering, if not a downright painful thing, while wishing to be nice about it, to suffer an uncertainty so large in sheer miles and to fumble for the essential in a matter which the native can indicate with a gesture without being adept in indicating by any decipherable diagram or *locus classicus*.

It is to be suspected that our visitors have often gone away with a secreted conviction that our most marked collective difference is this national anxiety about difference. Whatever may come to the onlooker by oral communication, there can be no question that our written confessions would convey to him an amazing solicitude as to regional integrity. The European need not cross the sea to know

that Americans worry about their originality, and especially about its apportionment. He needs no physical contact to know that we are immensely concerned not only about our title deeds to humor and frankness and push and difference, but about the order of geographical precedence in these matters. We like to think that we have obliterated effete lines of social caste, yet we are acutely jealous, according to many of the critics, of a decent ordering in our "originality" relations. If complete originality must have the head of the table, the assumption seems to be that only an unrelenting critical Burke can accomplish an orderly seating.

Thirty years ago I read a learned opinion to the effect that trying to "get" American life was like trying to estimate a landscape through the window of a rapidly moving train. The comment was not made by a foreigner. It was made by an American writer who was, I am sure, profoundly concerned over the need to transcribe the whole of America into something decorously and even devoutly "native." Evidently he believed that "the great American novel" would represent a huge encyclopædic cross section of the Republic, and he resented the squirming activity of the "material." How can you make a cross section of a thing that squirms? The implication was that Europe would hold still while you sketched it,

but that nothing satisfactory could be done with a subject that refused to be decently quiet, that was restless like a baby in a photograph gallery.

The comment I am recalling had been made before. It has been repeated many times since. It will be offered again. Frenchmen say some equivalent thing about Paris. Once Paris was fixed. Now landmarks are disappearing. Naturally landmarks were always disappearing and all eras have been eras of transition. But this suggestion is repugnant to a certain sort of person—the sort of person who can accept foreground evidence of change, but is offended by the thought that change may always have been busy. The cautious find a prop in the static, and these are often encouraged by historians, who sometimes seem willing to let us believe that certain periods were wholly without movement. One gets the impression that historians often hold back movement until the proper place in a chapter. To give human evolution this jerky advance is plainly preferred as adding "snap" to its drama.

At all events, persons of a standardizing habit want images to stay very still, to be not only very still, but to give assurance that they are not by any chance to move unduly and disqualify the record. If anything is missing in report of American life it is quite possible

to believe that it is not because American life is in transition, but because this uproariously funny thought about transition and its disqualifying effects has managed to creep even into creative minds.

And while we wonder why there is no possible thrill in the transitional, why only the settled can be described, here comes the accusation that New York must be dismissed as too settled to be characteristic. Since the transitional won't stay still to be written, and the settled isn't native enough to be written, the dilemma surely is complete. Chicago, too, is accused of hardening into unavailability. The truth is that Chicago is as unlike Mobile as New York is unlike Seattle. This may be admitted. It is the small town, of New England, of the South, of the Middle West, of the Coast, that is aspersed by the uniformity label —or crowned as "characteristic."

Only the untraveled—or the merely train traveled—believe that small towns of any section have a flat uniformity. It is always an alien race of whose members we are quick to say, "They are all alike," and it is the unknown neighbor who sinks into type obscurity. Really to know a town, big or little, is to experience the displacement of type by personality. To have studied American cities from San Francisco to Savannah; to have felt the throb under

the careless mask of small towns; to have haunted hundreds of villages that are as different as men, that are too busy with human problems to know anything about type obligations, is to find fresh absurdity in the solemn or flippant application of type labels.

The astounding thing is not blunder as to likeness or unlikeness in American centers, but the pretense that these relativities have some bearing on the duties of art. One might wonder whether this is a purely American pretense. No painter or novelist who describes London apologizes because London is not native as Normanby is native. No violent unlikeness of Paris as compared with Carcassonne invalidates the Frenchness of anything written about the capital. "Madame Bovary" is not accused of having failed to reflect Bordeaux. Mr. Hardy may choose Wessex with an impunity equal to that yielded to Mr. Conrad in his wanderings through the seven seas.

American writers have shown a disposition to accept region as an opportunity rather than as an obligation, yet American writers have repeatedly encountered the critical reminder that our literature might have been more racy of the soil if it had been more place-conscious. Again and again writers have been urged to consider whether they might not be more

native in effect by taking a train; unless it had been agreed that they were correctly placed, in which case they were attacked, sometimes violently, for daring to move. Awkwardly, Walt Whitman liked Broadway, and could select so vulgar and metropolitan a subject as the Brooklyn ferry. Poe also was foolishly New-Yorkish; Howells, who should have been warned by tradition, did not go back to Martins Ferry, but to New York; and O. Henry actually pretended that New York was a mine of American romance. Of course the arch-offenders were Bret Harte and Henry James, who moved all the way to London. These, doubtless, should be set aside as beyond the pale.

Although, as I have suggested, my ambiguous position as a born New-Yorker may be disqualifying, I venture the admission that New York does not seem to me to be the very "original." To be sure, I have never visited any town, small or large, that did not in some degree reflect the influence of other towns. The trouble is that New York has been indicted for going too far in reflecting the influence of Europe. That imputation is always shocking. Yet some town has to bear the responsibility of filtering foreign influences, and even a town thus engaged must present some sort of a spectacle. It still remains a human

circumstance such as it is. I have heard it said that New York cannot be considered as "American" because it is "full of foreigners." But even as a place full of foreigners it is a place in America, and the foreigners are all persons. For that matter, the United States has always been full of foreigners. The image of the United States that shines before the world would be a trifle ironic if a good many of our towns were not "full of foreigners." If founders of the Republic could be foreigners —well, the foreigner notion is pretty well answered in our literature, if not always in our parlor civics.

New York's smug insularity, like the insularity of older Rome or newer London, is not less a reality because it is exasperating or because its resemblances are unfortunate. If a village in Iowa is "characteristic"—that is, like something else—a Broadway is whatever it is for the same simple human reasons. Because both are states of mind, the trite and the unique establish their individual blend. As for New York's assumption that it is the center of things, I admit that this expresses one of its most commonplace habits. Only one who has ransacked the United States can know, of fact, how completely trite this trait is. There is nothing unrighteous about the assumption. It is natural; perhaps it is inherently indis-

pensable. An individual or a group that does not intuitively accept the idea of being at the center is probably abnormal and open to suspicion. Very likely the claim or the admission, to be graceful, needs an appropriate tone of voice. The artifice we call modesty has its grades. The big place needs a big modesty, and it doesn't always have it.

New York's disqualifying reflections of Europe are indicated as particularly serious in an art consideration. "Difference" means, above all else, difference from Europe. The eagerness to find parts of America that are sufficiently different from Europe can, as I have suggested, reach the fervidness of a patriotic mania. Since we have established the principle of measuring individual Americanism in percentages, it may be that towns will suffer the same estimate, and that if a town in Connecticut or Georgia or Oregon shows a failed percentage it will become a perilous thing to get itself written.

I should not overlook the fact that to "sell" ourselves abroad we must have the expected seasoning. The movies, finding a profitable foreign market, adroitly perpetuated an obsolete wildness in Western scenes. Europe is not to be amused by anything American that is not more than a little raw. Yet I have not discovered that the best interpreters of life

in America have done their writing with an eye on Europe.

Probably there is no real danger that any novelist who is worth his salt will be made place-conscious in an inhibiting degree by any grotesque maunderings about nativeness, though the novelist may find diversion in studying place-consciousness as a factor. It may be that as a factor he might find it to have the weight of more than a joke. In his serious moods he may conclude that the peering, puttering analyses of subject, the apprehensive discrimination between this and that spot, this and that character, as perfectly or imperfectly "American," was never more futile, never more antipathetic to the hungers of the world, than at this hour. Samuel Butler thought that America was not a good place in which to be a genius. He may have been right. But probably it is as good a place in which to be artistically honest as any that is available at the moment.

The novelist may have his personal regret that a town is not more original, if originality seems to him important, just as he might lament the same thing about a man. Yet it may not seem to him imperative that he should write about original towns or original men only. He may have awakened to the fact that the important thing is not that the sub-

ject should be original, but that the artist should be original—by being honest, for example. He may have realized that complete honesty is always original; that if no two thumbprints are alike, no two soulprints are alike, either. If he saw the highest importance not in difference, but in truth, he might set to work trying to understand the life at hand, wherever it was, and trying to convey a sense of that life to lives elsewhere. He might do this upon a theory that it is more creative to tell the utter truth about a commonplace man than merely to elaborate the divergences of a "different" one—because he thought the commonplaceness of misunderstanding to be the ultimate ugliness, either in patriotism or in art. Naturally, most men and most places are commonplace. Real pictures of either continue to have the rarity of a highly elusive gem. While men, outwardly at least, remain much the same from year to year, expressions of truth will ever be changing, ever flashing new phases of beauty.

Great art has never begun in a feverish search for something "native." If great art has had heat, that quality has shone in the white intensity of its communication. The poet doesn't shun the clouds because they have been "done," or because they haven't a "native" quality. The kind of mind that can

separate human elements of material, not as a matter of personal choice, but as if there could be a fundamental differentiation of verity, is the kind of mind that can rack itself to determine whether the novel is "a true art form." True art form! Maybe we need some one with the exalted energy of a Nazarene to break the face of dogma, to point out vigorously that the human creature is It, that humanities, in Russia or on Broadways, give a gray cast to every other possible consideration, including those of geography and of art. If a man has a passion boiling in him it does not matter whether he crouches in a rice field of the South or runs a steel cage in a skyscraper. If a woman's nerves go to smash it doesn't matter whether her washtub and her babies are in a ranch house or in a tenement. The bitter is not more nor less real by being "native" or in the right county.

In short, native novels will continue to be written by artists who can forget long enough that they are themselves native, who can forget long enough that they or their subjects must be 100 per cent., who can forget boundaries, "art forms," anxieties about originality, or "the great American novel." The real scene of every creative work is the heart of the artist; nothing is real to him until he has found it there; which is to say that the ulti-

mate need of the artist is not merely that he should "know his subject" and express a place. It is that he should, if he has the luck, know himself and express humanity. A platitude, naturally. But the elemental is never original. This may explain why self-conscious eagerness so often misses it altogether.

HEROINE COMPLEXES

HEROINE COMPLEXES

ANY obligation may become irksome; even a beautiful obligation, one that in itself begins pleasantly, that in itself intrigues the fancy and threatens comfortably to chloroform the conscience. For example, to become the literary father of some delightful or even moderately entertaining girl offers a natural inflation to vanity. One may have dreamed of heroines. Then perhaps the tempter whispers, offering a poised wand (inked), "Invoke your own!" But when one yields, when the perilous necromancy, that so easily seems like no magic at all, has given the ink of life to a veritable person, and he has, in the course of time, become parentally fond, the trouble begins. In the end he is told that the child whose waywardness he had hoped to conceal is very badly brought up. And you know how sensitive fathers are.

It was some sense of this predicament that led me, rather petulantly, to remark to the girl with the questioning eyes that I can't

manage women, even in books. Of course, to make my point I had to drag in the living women. What is a sex between debaters?

At this the girl with the questioning eyes asked, in her charming vernacular, "What do you mean, manage?"

"I mean," I said, "make them do what they ought to do. In real life a man is inclined, occasionally, to think he has done it. To be specific, there are cases where a woman gives a plain 'Yes' to a proposal of marriage. Having accomplished the categorical, a man is ready to believe any foolish thing. Under such circumstances he will go forward quite confidently with all sorts of diagrams. The veil of the future lifts. He knows just how things are going to be. But what really does happen afterward? Does the woman ever fail, at the right time, to remind the man that there were others, and even that, after all, she might have done better? Of course she does these things for his good. She has told me so. Marrying a man would, after all, be a bit too much for his conceit if there weren't ways of qualifying the thing afterward. Some women go pretty far, if we may judge from the reports. Evidently some of them overdo it. But I suppose their motives are sound. Discipline must be maintained."

Wasn't it that women were getting to be

more independent or something? suggested the girl with the questioning eyes.

There is more to it than that, I insisted; something more intricate; not merely the development of simple initiative, but the result, it may be, of some theory of amplified, of progressive, revelation. Isn't there a possible symbolism in the fact that she has covered her ears and accentuated her lips? When the modern Œdipus tries to read the lips of the Sphinx he sees red—lots of it, applied while he waits.

The whole history of man and woman makes it clear (I said to the girl) that some things have reached men very slowly. First, man hit woman with a club (his clubs have always been an annoyance to her). Then she was sold to him—without any make-believe. Later on there was the pretense of his asking her. After that came an institution called Gallantry, a pretty nasty affair, usually. By and by she began to pretend that she had something to do with the choice. For a long time she actually has been making a choice—that is, taking the best she has happened to find. The notion that she doesn't have to marry at all unless she wants to—that notion came last—was a stunning blow to men. It changed the entire technic of the masculine process, and I don't think women care to lose, before marriage or

after, the advantage of the theory and man's knowledge of it.

This makes managing women an impossibility. The whole scheme of managing them was based on conditions that are obsolete. Naturally, there are women who will pretend to be manageable, and naturally these are managed least.

"But in a book—" began the girl with the questioning eyes.

Yes, it is natural (I pointed out) to jump at the conclusion that everything is different in a book. But in a book the women are still women, if the author has made them real, and if the author is a man he is certain to find that they will get away from him. I know what I am talking about. Any appearance of levity only hides the bitterness of experience. . . . I have one girl in mind. I liked her immensely. Probably that was what made me too easy. I ought to have been firm. Only a misogynist should write a story with love in it. He could keep cool.

I suppose the love struggles of authors will never quite adequately be told. I don't mean the kind of struggle authors have in the sordid world. These have been told enough. After the author is dead his foolishest love letters come under the spotlight, especially if anyone finds a really good reason why they shouldn't.

I am thinking of the struggles he has with the most unmanageable women of all—the women he creates. He may start off with the intention of holding them harshly in hand. If they obeyed him he would know they weren't real. That's his big problem. Being a human man as well as an author, he'd rather have them real than obedient. But this not only makes him a lot of work, but raises the devil with plots.

Holding what you would call a confidential relation, you might think (I said to the girl) that the author would know what his heroine was going to do next and act accordingly—get around and head her off. But in a single paragraph she may swing into an entirely unexpected direction and get a lead that leaves him breathless. In that case the author has to be what is colloquially known as a fast worker to save any of his self-respect.

In books, as in life, there are, too, other people to think of. We say of lovers in real life, "They were made for each other," though generally they are most likely to say that of themselves. What happens when two people the author has made for each other sulk about pairing, refuse to see that they *are* made for each other, I leave you to imagine. The women make the most trouble. It is as if, even in books, they hated arranged marriages, or arranged independence, either.

"You see," I said to the girl with the questioning eyes, "I'm putting the blame upon the women, quite as usual. But if a male author weren't male he wouldn't be human. And if he weren't human he wouldn't try to write. And there you are."

After all, the girl with the eyes had a specific case, which was annoying, and I almost told her so. "You must not go into such things," I said. "I am supposed to leave the reader to get all that. You know, of course, that it is wrong to end happily; that is to say, it is strategically reprehensible. It connotes something unpleasant—so many stupid things end happily. It is right enough in life, if you can manage it. But for the same reason that divorces are entertaining and that a happy couple can be very trying, only something at least debatable has any artistic possibilities. This is why it is disastrous to fall in love with your own heroine. As a man you want her to be happy. As an artist you must make her miserable."

"I see," said the girl with the questioning eyes.

But I was sure that she didn't. I was talking through her hat.

ON BROADWAY

ON BROADWAY

FOR most of us a street is a stage setting in the drama of memory. Objectively it may call up, in a first meeting, other scenes, other times. It may suggest an Alhambra, a Naples, or a Haymarket. It may then invite or repel. If we are benighted enough to believe that God made the country and man made the town; if we are incapable of seeing that a skyscraper is as natural as a lark's nest; if we are infected by the sort of reactionary æstheticism that sees a jumble in Europe as picturesque and romantic, and in America as haphazard and vulgar, then a New York street, for example, can give text for copious corrective melancholy. At the last, Doctor Johnson was "willing to call a man a good man on easier terms than heretofore." When we have seen streets enough in towns enough, without missing the people in them, we are able to call a street an interesting street without suffering so sharp a twinge in our bigotry nerve.

But above all the qualities a street may hold as a pictorial fact shines that of its office as

background to individual experience. In a large way a street may be known to us by the company it keeps; in memory it is likely to get its sharpest illumination from significant faces we recall, and which in turn recall the street. The human streams of Broadway melt like a cloud. The figures of memory are indelibly silhouetted. In the vast fantastic hush of midnight those downtown reaches hold for me a whispering Babel. From the faint yet piercing chorus I can attempt to sort out and fit to the belonging faces the voices of vanished men. And a dozen miles to the north, where the street of the seven sins worms its course among the rocks to Spuyten Duyvil—brazenly maintaining to the brink of its island, "I am Broadway!"—equally good private reasons prepare me for spectral echoes.

So much for being born a little way off; for beginning with it as the ultimate magic; for having seen it youthfully as a great Thing, sometimes bannered, sometimes disemboweled, here rearing its vertebra like an angry leviathan or coughing out a tooth, there fuming to heaven, with its hundred thousand eyes glaring feverishly; for having learned to know something of its ironies and to accept it as a symbol and illustration of eternal change. I have wandered in it as a great path on which glittered the peculiar treasure of kings, and I have

shambled there when I felt as if, like the Playboy, I were "living lonesome in the world." I have thought of it as the epitome of length, and as expressing an incorrigible haughtiness of height. It has seemed that it must be seared by the torches of endless processions, or that cheering must be its preoccupation. Then again, the catafalque of Grant, with the inky trappings and the hordes of marchers, moving with a thrilling slowness between those primeval telegraph poles, seemed to promise that it would be permanently sobered. But it has never been permanently anything but restless.

One might say that temperamentally it had always been a bit stagy. History helps the impression. But history is another matter. This writing represents the sheer egoism of personal reaction, which can be stagy, too, on occasion, especially when boy images are mixed up with the foundations of the picture. The truth is that I see my own boy figure at the very foot of the street, returning after a wild adventure in Europe. That cheese-box affair, Castle Garden, which had been a fearsome fort, then Jenny Lind's concert hall, and is now a boarding house for queerly gorgeous fish, was then a purgatory for immigrants; and having gone forth and returned in the steerage, I must come through the nation's appointed gate and be catalogued. When the man with the official

cap asked, "Where were you born?" I made answer, "New York," and became aware that his attention had been caught; and when in reply to "What's your trade?" I said, "Reporter," my further progress was amiably facilitated. A woman gave me a Bible and I bolted for Broadway.

In recollection the street is sharply segmented. Each feature stands out most vividly when it frames a figure—as when I see Herbert Spencer staring at Old Trinity. I remember that particular day as one on which I met Robert Ingersoll near the same spot. The "illustrious infidel" halted to tell me that if I would come to his office later in the afternoon he would give me the interview I wanted. Naturally I think it is a great quality to be patient with reporters—especially very young reporters. Henry Irving, with whom I talked in a quiet corner of a club, said that nothing in America had appalled him like reporters. Not that he didn't like them. On the contrary. . . . But somehow (he moved his stick nervously) one wasn't quite sure what sort of thing one ought to say. A little later I saw Irving walking with a portly, flagrantly contrasting man near Union Square, swinging the stick that had helped emphasize his apprehension.

The platitude is not that one once met

everybody below Union Square, but that the great meeting places, unlike perhaps those of any other famous street, have been so steadily and so widely moved. In the matter of Broadway this could only be northward. At the period of Prince Edward's ball I suppose it was impossible to count on meeting anyone very far from the Astor House, and anywhere between Wall Street and St. Paul's or City Hall Park one still has occasional chances, though these chances no longer are likely to include that of jostling celebrities on foot. My memory ghosts are most numerous in the region of the City Hall, the region of literary legend, of taverns, and of press rooms. They troop back from the time when the man on the top of the Center Street shot tower signaled that the trap had sprung in the Tombs quadrangle and that the extras were now free to celebrate another poor devil as duly hung.

(Two ghosts crowd in where they do not belong. They stood side by side, these two men, on that raw morning, to be officially strangled. Writhing in that cold and horrible Tombs yard I saw the traps sprung and a flock of pigeons, startled by the noise, rising in a shivering flight. A big Irishman beside me began to cry. . . . It was all part of a reporter's job. It went along with bothering Presidents and asking brides to describe their gowns.)

The northward drift of the bookish and theater regions carried its implication as to personality, so that while the frames for Edwin Booth arm in arm with Lawrence Barrett, Tomaso Salvini stalking to a cab, Patti shining out of white fur, Robert Louis Stevenson at Scribner's or James Russell Lowell hurrying out of the old *Century* office, all belong in or near Union Square, later encounters belong to a farther north.

The scene shifts to Madison Square when I recall Mark Twain (in a moist darkness) cussing New York's cab service, or O. Henry looking up at the stars and wondering why cities were never supposed to have any. There is, too, the picture of "Hop" Smith telling Rudyard Kipling the story of the man who asked his new acquaintance, "How do you like Kipling?" "To tell you the truth," was the answer, "I never played it." R. K.'s appreciative laugh (I think everybody else had heard the quip) seemed to be reward enough for the quoter.

Then there was one twilight walk of a mile or more with Edmund Clarence Stedman, who liked the shop windows, who corrected me as to a quotation from his "Toujours Amour," who talked of Poe and Whitman, and of what Dante might have done with a New York rush hour. I repeated the story Richard Hard-

ing Davis had told me of the youngster who wanted to write up the Bowery. Davis, who was then editor of *Harper's Weekly*, quite reasonably suggested that the Bowery had been tremendously done. "Yes," cried the youngster, "but it has never been done by *me!*"—which happened to prove, in that case, an irresistible argument. Stedman agreed, and with enthusiasm, that it was the *doer* and not the thing done that made the vast difference, and he came back to this when I mentioned a little later the fascination of a beautifully right word. He had just written somewhere (perhaps in *The Nature and Elements of Poetry*) of "a strenuous line," and the word had caught me as exquisitely fitting as it fell. "Strenuous life" was not yet a battered phrase, but the fate of the word was fully prophesied in Stedman's remark about the way words came to be bruised, not merely by the attritions of ordinary use, but by an intensive jugglery. It was as when a pleasant and not unwelcome bit of melody was put on the hand organs. I suggested that being overplayed had reactions a good deal like being overpraised. Wasn't it true that in either case reactions did not go by original deserts or original claims, but by the need to chastise the offending reiterators? "Criticism is full of that sort of thing!" cried Stedman.

Perhaps an occasional impatience toward Broadway has an origin of this same sort. A self-consciousness comes to be ascribed to the street itself. Yet neither the noisy nor the tawdry can rob the highway of humanness. Its steel and stone frame a state of mind that cannot be measured as of width and length. Its gamut is fantastically inclusive. Whether in the heyday of the Salvation Army or in the golden age of the soap-boxers, in the mobbing of a prince or a prisoner, in the funny curiosity of its crowds, quite impartial between a deadly smash-up and some buffoonery of advertising, we may see it as pagan and as evangelical. Any sort of soul can find response there. Somewhere it is the kind of street you want it to be—unless, indeed, you are a restless person, a dreamer of dreams, willing to risk classification as a "dangerous radical" by looking for an amended nature, by being unwilling to have humanity remain precisely as it is.

The native may well wonder (it is part of a native weakness so to wonder) what the foreigner gathers from the mere spectacle—not what he may chance to say as a guest, but what really rankles in his mind. There is a rich anthology of the audible. If ghosts of the living and of the dead might whisper in a candor transcending all possible repressions, we should,

doubtless, be in for a stimulating shock. I remember parting with H. G. Wells at midnight (this was in 1906), after an evening at a club to which I had lured him, and of seeing him recede into the mists of light in the direction of the hotel where, earlier in his visit, we had discussed *The War of the Worlds* (for the purpose of an article I was writing), and my feeling of acute curiosity as to what might be kindled in this extraordinary imagination by the raw facts of New York. That later comparison with Venice hinted of the picture side; deeper connotations were not so easily to be marked or traced. To one who could not let the future alone, the hulking outlines and the kaleidoscopic humanity would spell a very old rune and flash prophetically into the dark just as they have spelled and flashed for a Whitman, a Maeterlinck, a Lanier, a Dunsany, a Kipling, and a Yeats.

In the midst of one of the most glaring scenic *ensembles* John Burroughs once stopped abruptly to review, as he might have reviewed the glitter of a seven-ring circus, the stretching phantasmagoria of the street. His white head was as foreign in effect as if it had been Aristotle's. It belonged in that vineyard on the sultry hillside at Esopus where I had seen it bobbing among the leaves, and where he had laughingly shown me on the packing table the

antics of a drunken bee who had tarried too long among broken and sun-fermented grapes. At the moment Broadway seemed particularly neurasthenic. The twitching electric constellations; the tornado of eye tokens; the huge vulgarities of appeal, smeared with color and sharpened to create new kinds of pricking points; the squirming of traffic; the symphonic uproar, ceaseless, punctuated with piccolo yelpings and profound brassy snorts; the amazing scurrying figures, sucked or disgorged by the raucous recesses of the vista; the evening overtones, laden with distant murmurs that floated as from the rim of the world—all this seemed to be appraised in that half minute of pause. Then he turned to me with a queer smile. "I suppose," he said, "that in fifty years the like of this will seem quiet!"

CLOTHES AND THE WOMAN

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MY innocent remark upon that failure in man's sense of humor which induces him to think that woman is dressing solely for him, has elicited sharp rebuke from Mrs. Gilman; a circumstance from which we may learn that no aside is safe simply by being casual. Mrs. Gilman insists that as it was in the beginning it now is; that women are still under the spell of an ancient, perhaps even an elemental, impulsion; that I am biologically wrong in assuming that time has definitely modified the instinct of the female to recommend herself to the male by devices of decoration.

An eminent sociologist might be presumed to speak with authority, and when, in a matter concerning women, the eminent sociologist happens to be a woman and one of the world's foremost exponents of the feminine side, no man who retorts can avoid a sense of hazard. Even a man arrogant enough to feel like the entomologist who knew all that it was possible to know about ants *without being an ant* must

still be aware that the odds are against him; and I waste no time in denying any such arrogance.

Yet it may be said that the entomologist knew some things about ants which the ants did not know about themselves. There is no need to expand this point. You will suspect me of believing that a possible way to know certain things about one sex is to belong to the other. probably this suggestion need not be directly applicable to a question of dress; yet it may have a relationship.

Then there is that complicated question of instinct and motive. Few if any of our acts or habits have a single causation, and most of us are poor witnesses as to our own motives. We have an instinct and label it with a motive. Over a bunch of these little motive labels we paste a large label called a principle. The instincts keep right on ignoring the labels and letting the labels do the talking.

It is for this reason that I cannot logically or confidently quote the fact that many women have assured me that women do not dress to please men. Quite aside from the fact that a great many women have assured me of things that are not so, I must admit this other fact about human motives as advising a certain caution. And it will be prudent to indicate in some appropriate way that I did not acquire

the theory Mrs. Gilman criticizes by any admissions or protests of women themselves. If I were willing to accept such testimony at face (or figure) value I might go on thinking that Mrs. Gilman had been outvoted. For the moment I ignore the testimony, just as women persistently ignore the fact that you cannot paint the lily. Denial not only does not remove suspicion, but often inspires it. I could concede without a qualm that there are reasons why women, speaking to a man, might find it comfortable and salutary to deny dressing to please men. Looking at the matter calmly, or as near calmly as any man may hope to look in such a tight place, I can see that denying motives of this sort might naturally arise from a sense of need to take some of the conceit out of men. Even a clever concealment of one motive might gather excuse from the promptings of another so praiseworthy.

On the other hand, Mrs. Gilman herself must have a motive. I am sure that her motive is to establish the truth. If the truth convicted men, I am sure, too, that she would not be unduly gratified. Since it is possible that I also might be accused of having a motive, I will concede at once that, in view of the history of feminine ornament, some men might feel quite sharply hurt by proof that they were responsible for the way women dress. Yet, if

it were permissible to argue, it would be only fair to point out that no amount of proof showing that most men are biased is really proof that I am. Though no man could be free from suspicion, one might claim to have acquired knowledge while simply enjoying what Mr. Conrad has called "the privileged detachment of a cultivated mind."

All of Mrs. Gilman's biological deductions as to primitive women may be conceded. I take the risk of admitting anything as to early women and early men, and that devices of sex attraction are no more obsolete than sex rivalry. But I cannot concede that because women began decorating themselves to please men they still decorate themselves wholly or even generally for that same simple reason. It will not do to rally the support of Havelock Ellis or any of the other scientists who assure us that such primitive impulses have long been superseded. Mrs. Gilman has no awe for scientists, especially when they chatter about women. Nevertheless, I venture to suggest that there are various signs, plain to everyone, that the dress of women, like many another institutional function, has strayed far from its beginnings.

It is conceivable that the orthodox Jewish woman who dons a harsh wig and tries to look old and settled after her marriage, and the

fashionable Christian woman who tries after her marriage to look as unsettled and as young as possible, are both willing to please men. Mrs. Gilman sees a relaxing of dress coquetries after marriage. Undoubtedly the same abandonments appear in many men. Courtship is a highly competitive game—more competitive than it used to be—and artifices of dress are as common as artifices of conduct, on both sides of the house. But the proportion of women who abandon pretty clothes after marriage for any reason other than because they can't get them, or haven't a chance to wear them, is surely very small. There must be, also, some evidential weight in the fact that the most extravagantly decorative clothes are very often worn by women who have accomplished marriage. These women might have sense enough to know that pleasing men, and particularly a man, is still good strategy. It will be a sad world when the pleasing of one woman by one man and the pleasing of one man by one woman stops being instinctive or profitable. But the signs go quite beyond that. An excessive splendor so often persists long after domestic groaning begins, so long after even bankruptcy sets in, that one would often have to eliminate the husband at least from the list of pleased men. The notorious fact that husbands—not to consider particularly the stingy

ones—are, as a class, unobservant and unappreciative of partner decoration, might not disprove the continued need for the coquetry. It certainly would not prove that an art fails of effect even where its technic is unobserved. And it has a tendency to imply that women are conscious of the fact that there are other men. But it rather hampers proof that women have any singleness of need for masculine approval.

The negligence about dress after marriage which Mrs. Gilman regards as so significant would look like support for a theory that women thought in terms of one man. Thinking in terms of one man, in the matter of clothes or of anything else not involving the basic union, is about the last thing one would care to ascribe to the American woman. It ought to be unpleasant to ascribe it to any woman.

However, I must not overlook the fact that Mrs. Gilman does not insist that women are thinking of men or of a man, in the concrete sense. It is, she implies, in a large way that the primal impulse foliates, whatever women may say or even think. A feeling with regard to the opposite sex began it, and that feeling, secretly or openly, consciously or unconsciously, dominates the expression—that is the contention.

To believe this we should have to overlook

many a related circumstance. The primitive woman may have decorated and drudged (she was a wonderful bundle carrier, and was permitted to carry all the bundles) to please a man. The civilized parallel is far from perfect, and at one of the imperfect points the free or freer woman slips through. A great many things she once did simply to please a man she now does to please or propitiate or rival an environing humanity, or to please herself. I am not thinking of the exceptional woman at the head of a big corporation, or of any less exceptional woman who may be the wage-earning head of a family with a useless man in it. I am thinking of the average American woman, still decorating herself and carrying burdens of some human sort. If men began by decorating themselves to dazzle women and now find a more imperative reason for dressing well in the fact that it is good business, why may it not be reasonable to give women credit for the same shrewdness?

Nothing is clearer than the primitive reason for daily labor, yet who does not see the means converted into an end? Who does not know men who set out to get money with which to live and who long ago lost sense of anything but the money? Who has failed to hear men who once sought a means to express ideas one to another now talking about art for art's sake?

We call these and other changes perversion when we don't like them. When we accept them we call them evolution. As by the aspersions upon the vermiform appendix, some things lose their original meaning altogether.

The dress of women has lost no expression it once had, but it has gained many others. It has become a great art—often practiced for its own sake. What was once primitively personal has become artistically social. In my opinion the man, instanced by Mrs. Gilman, who would not go forth with his wife without the crinoline when crinoline was the fashion, was not influenced by male instinct or by thought of other men. He was influenced by the thing that influences us all more than any other thing—social pressure. There is a social expectation that women will be highly decorated and that men will not be highly decorated. It doesn't make much difference how that expectation came about. It is there. I believe that for a woman this pressure is felt as exerted mostly by other women. If designed merely to please men, decoration might be just as assertive but it would scarcely need to be so fine an art as it now is. The Saturday-night emphasis at a summer colony may be occasioned by men, but men may be an occasion without being a cause. They may, for instance, be an excuse.

It may please a man to marry him, but it would be absurd to say that a woman is necessarily thinking of nothing else, or is intuitionally prompted by nothing else, when she does marry him. There is no need to expound the other social or purely personal impulsions that might make pleasing him, either as a man or as an economic factor, about the last thing in her mind.

After all, I may end where Mrs. Gilman's retort began—with that word "solely." I do not think my allusion was so poorly safeguarded as she pretends. "Solely for him" cannot be made to mean solely as to the elements or functions of clothes. It must, I think, be taken to mean solely as to women's instincts or motives.

I believe that some women "doll up" *almost* solely to please men. I believe that many others have never had any such motive, latent or conscious. I believe that most women are willing that their decoration should incidentally please men. It is, I think we might say, a matter of percentages. Of course the percentage must be altogether a matter of opinion, whether it is estimated by a man or by a woman. The debated fling was aimed at the complacency that permits some men to think that the whole fuss has had men for its special and ultimate mark. The notion that modern

women live their lives in any particular and to any absorbing extent specifically to please men, still seems to me quite fantastic.

I don't believe women "dress" solely to please men, not only because they don't have to take that much trouble; not only because dress is so satisfying in itself and because, as an art, it must always be influenced more by its specialist criticism than by intimate or general spectators (and women are the specialists), but because so many women have other business in life, and pleasing other women has become as important to women as pleasing men—in a vast number of cases more important. I don't believe the special sense of humor which women illustrate in their clothes is equally distributed among all women. Some women, it is quite evident, do not see the clothes pleasantry at all. Every artist is under the hazard of a blind spot. The hideousness of a white nose or painted lips might be taken as a case in point. Yet I am still quite sure men usually miss the art implications and the subtle difference between pleasing and teasing; still sure the cynic may find some excuse for suggesting that a great number of women are more interested in men as a means of winning clothes than in clothes as a means of winning men.

RESPICE FINEM

RESPICE FINEM

MR. MENCKEN has remarked, without lament, but in token of a curiosity as to a rather interesting circumstance, that there is a poor literature of kissing. His own contribution is painfully physiological, but the subject is physiological and can be disquieting under the best of conditions. The one mushy book cited by Mr. Mencken might reinforce us in being grateful, as he is, that there are not more. Probably the lack is not explained by refined reserve. Literature has been written by all sorts of men and women, a good many of whom have had no refined reserve. There must be a better explanation. Perhaps this may be found in the difficulties of treatise expansion as to a subject essentially incidental. Yet volumes have been written about more parenthetical subjects. That charming Frenchman who made a book about *A Journey Round My Room* proved something that was much more difficult to prove. Many a kiss (it is said) has lasted longer than a journey round any room; and (as Mr. Mencken points out) a kiss may be

reiterated, so that while a single kiss has some theoretical maximum of duration, kissing may pass from an incident to a preoccupation and thus have a truly dimensional importance. If a crisis could deserve a chapter a cycle could deserve a quarto.

But more significant, it seems to me, than any discursive omissions of literature is the fact, now plainly discoverable, that literature has lost its chance. No one may now venture to waste many words upon the subject of kissing. The movies have pre-empted the field. Art seeks to light up the obscure. The movies leave no obscurities. They illuminate all. The mechanics of the kiss have been figured *in extenso*. Its psychology has been diagrammed and expounded to the ultimate fraction. Words can be no larger than life. The movies spell psychology in titanic terms. Abetted by the expanding lantern, the camera dissects an emotion to the thousandth of an inch. No margin is left to the imagination or to the sense of shame.

Perhaps it may be discovered that the suggestive power of the cinema has been grossly misstated. The screen does not suggest; it tells everything. If kissing has been largely the result of curiosity, it may happen that the cinema will in time obliterate or at least diminish the status of kissing as an applied art;

for no one sitting in front of the popular screen could long retain any curiosities as to the function. Even the extension of the act is conveyed indellibly to the mind. It is true that censorship limits the picture of the incident (or event) to a few seconds, but the irislike contraction of darkness gives contact an infinity. I heard a nice old lady say after certain Swiss mountain pictures, "I feel as if I had *been* there!" Is it a fantastic conjecture that, by the vicarious participations of the screen, analysis of the kiss may elicit some corresponding finality of satisfaction?—that kissing, except for the purposes of the camera, will become obsolete?

WHAT THEY WANT

WHAT THEY WANT

"YOU know the sort of man I mean," said Brant; "the sort that says, 'I don't know anything about art, but I know what I like.' If you were getting up an Anthology of Platitude you'd want a few rich sessions with him—and his wife. Oh yes! His wife would be a wonderful help. She'd furnish you with a handsome choice of stuff for a whole section of your Book of Bromides. And for the appendix—or are they cutting appendixes out of books too?"

"If you're trying to particularize," I said, "it seems rather foolish to make your point with platitude. Platitudinous persons are the most numerous of all, naturally. And a good thing that is. Fancy corn or grass or gravitation taking a notion to be original! The whole human game we play on this planet is based in platitude—in an expectation that most of the human units will keep right on being pretty much as they have been; and if they keep on being the same they will keep on saying the same."

"Is this editorial cynicism?" demanded Brant, "or authorial irony?"

Brant knows that for years (and years) my pen has led a double life; that I have been a newspaper editor and that I have been writing books. He thinks it is a sign of shrewdness to wonder, on any given occasion, from which angle comment comes. Sometimes I have to remind him that one may be not only an editor and a writer, but also a reader—that is, a *person.* Any rights I may have as a person I purpose to retain against all the assaults of circumstances. Yet Brant is fair enough in recognizing the possibility, if not the probability, of an angle of emphasis. That each situation involves a special outlook (and *in*look) is just as true as that when my friend indicates north his gesture parallels no other on earth. The *point* he indicates is a common concept; the angle of indication is unique, individual.

Exploiting the obvious to him in this way had the purpose of making it clear—or at least emphatic—that the three positions were each tenable; that as a reader I looked for the writer who had written for me; that as a writer of books I might (and did) choose deliberately to write for those who happened to like the sort of thing I like; that as a newspaper editor I had to think of All-of-Us.

"This compulsion," I went on, "has been

good for me. It has kept me from a bookish narrowness to which I think I was predisposed. It has never kept me from preferring certain kinds of books or certain kinds of persons. But it has insisted upon an effort to understand, in some degree, all kinds of persons. It has insisted upon a glance behind that sprawling label 'The Public.'"

Brant, who enjoys taunting me into being oracular, did something corrective to his pipe, then mused, "I've always wondered what The Public is—or are."

"One would think, to hear most people speak of The Public," I rejoined, "that it was a *thing*—an organic, octopus kind of creature, wonderfully unified in its likes and dislikes, vastly *out there* beyond, as if one might go forth and confront It, and shout how stupid, or how cruel, or how indifferent and perverse it is. A man says, 'There was a crowd at the entrance when I came,' as if the situation then contained this crowd-thing *and* himself. It isn't only a way of speaking. It's a way of thinking—a very human way of thinking.

"One of the results of this way of thinking is that when people growl about the public they don't feel implicated. They don't feel the partner responsibility. It does make a big difference whether, when we accuse humanity, we speak with a membership humility—or chagrin.

When we think in terms of Me *and* All-the-Rest, and set off All-the-Rest as The Public, we can work up a fine fever of peevishness. I know men who can accuse humanity in a tone of voice that seems to imply that they themselves belong to an exalted and quite different species. They can even allude to elemental defects like plain selfishness as if the dreadful thing had come into existence outside of themselves, as a kind of lamentable freak of nature, or perhaps like some subtle epidemic against which they are inoculated. They shake their heads in a kind of despair, as if really, you know, it is a pity these other creatures can't see that bad spiritual sanitation makes all the trouble, and so on. I fancy it must be comforting, if not actually fattening, to be able to hold a position like that."

"Isn't that pretty much the attitude of the average man?" asked Brant.

"Each of us is the average man in most particulars. The point I am getting at is this: When a man says, 'I don't know anything about art, but I know what I like,' he may seem to be flinging at art and asserting the right of the average not to know anything about art, but what he is doing in particular is lazily refusing obligation—not only toward art, but toward other people. What *he* likes. That is what he sees. Maybe he admits, or even

claims, that he is just an average man. Maybe he doesn't feel that way at all. But he knows what *he* likes. Very good. It is important that we should be honest about liking what we like. Nothing is more pitiful than the spectacle of people making believe to like. Most of us learn to pretend so well that we deceive even ourselves. I knew a man who pretended for thirty years that he liked opera. He loved music and felt that opera was its mightiest expression. He was logical with himself. He thought he had to like it. Then some one told him that symphony was the highest form of musical expression, and his delight when he found that he could have the sublimities without the fat hero and the grandmotherly chorus maidens was a funny thing to see. It would be the same, of course, if his pretense had happened to be about spats or cheese."

"Or loving the public," suggests Brant.

"Yet he might happen to feel the obligation to *understand* the public, even if that is a large order. The obligation doesn't worry most of us, because most of us don't try it. The obligation to understand is pretty heavy luggage for the average human traveler. I speak from experience. It is easier to sit back and *say* we know what we like. Even being quite definite about that is a heavy tax. The artist may be definite enough. He needs to like—

and dislike—at white heat. He arrogates a privilege parallel to that of the man who doesn't know anything about art—he often seems to feel that it would be dangerous, if not fatal, to know anything about the public. Frequently he appears to feel that if he tried to understand the public he would be less keen about liking what he himself liked, and would then be unable to reach the white heat. Yet he must really wish that the public could understand him. If he is contemptuous, as he so frequently is, when few understand him, he must, whatever he may say, be thinking a little about being understood. When I am not being the editor I have a great deal of sympathy for him.

"Being understood isn't a class privilege, and understanding isn't a class obligation, even if the artist might seem to have especial need to feel it. But don't let us wander off into that art question—though all questions are art questions at some point, and it's a bit sad that the artist and your average man so frequently seem not to see this. What I'm getting at is that *somebody* should feel the obligation to stand off and 'get' the average of human wants and human wishes."

"Somebody like the editor."

"Well, the politician does it first. He has always done it first. Not find out what people *should* want, but what they *do* want. Some

wants are screamed by a few. Some are whispered by many. The wants of the silent are there, too. A big politician has to guess about all of them. I suppose a statesman is a man who can guess what people are *going* to want, or are going to think they want.

"When the editor has made *his* guess he must reach some decision as to what he will do in the matter of giving 'them' what they want. He is face to face with a huge problem.

"It has always been a fashion to make comment upon even the serious consideration of that problem as withering as possible. *Wanting* is accepted as quite human. Yielding to the expression of want, *answering* wishes, is open to caustic suspicion. Often it meets the imputation of being the ultimate wickedness. When the tradesman says, 'We have no call for it,' we are affronted by his explanation. We are particularly sensitive when giving them what they want happens in the other fellow's art or the other fellow's trade. The social idealist is shocked when the politician gives them what they want. The scientist is shocked when the editor gives them what they want. The artist is shocked when the merchant (a publishing merchant, for example) gives them what they want. And we all get together to be shocked when the preacher seems to be giving them what they want. Even that word

'them' acquires part of the contempt. You know how you feel when the subway guard rasps, 'Let 'em off!' You feel the inferiority of being a fragment of 'them.'

"If there is a preacher, or doctor, or lawyer, or merchant, or statesman who has been chastely uncompromising as between what *he* wants and what 'they' want, let him cast the first stone.

"As a matter of fact, there is an obligation that precedes the decision as to giving or not giving. I mean the obligation to find out the real truth as to what 'they' want. There may be a lot of wickedness in the willingness to give the public what it wants, but it dwindles before the wickedness of accepting, lazily or flippantly, a false decision as to what the want is. Nobody has ever proved to me that the public—that 'folks' in general, the most multiplied types of people—really care for vicious things. They may like tawdry things, and mush—Lord! how they do like mush!—but not the vicious, the nasty. The evidence is all the other way. In the matter of the stage, for example, take the plays that have the long runs and you have an answer."

"I'm glad," said Brant, "you don't pretend that the long run can be accomplished without hokum."

"I don't pretend that the answer is con-

clusive or *in*clusive. I don't contend that there is no low taste. There is a vulgarity so profound that the most resourceful depravity cannot fail to give it satisfaction. What I am contending is that even the most desperate wish to be 'popular' can succeed without giving a thought to that depraved minority, and that a nasty piece of print or a despicable screen show does not, in itself, convict the audience. Naturally, the problem would be easier if audiences had a better sense of their responsibility in rejection. Movies, for example, like newspapers, are elected. We all know nice people who are conscienceless voters.

"The fact is that in the matter of offer and acceptance there are always likely to be inadequate deductions. When the really conscientious are confused, when they talk about 'good' things that won't sell enough, I am inclined to wonder (particularly when I am thinking as the editor) whether they have overlooked plain human considerations. A thing that is only forty per cent *human* isn't likely to sell as well as a thing that is sixty per cent human. The 'good' often overlook the human. I mean here not only the uplift good, but the artistic good. When we overlook a basic thing like human interest we are inviting confusion."

"By the way," remarked Brant, "what *is* human interest, anyway?"

"We all have a vote in the answer to that question. And of course each of us is one of the illustrations. Unless we feel some pressing need to guess what human interest is we are content to say 'them,' to make sweeping gestures, sweeping decisions, to lump our assumptions. The first thing the newspaper editor, for example, comes to learn is that the public is made up of *so many kinds*. He can't make a paper for one kind. Like any other merchant, he wants to reach—that is to say, he *must* reach—humanity; so he looks among the kinds for the subject interests that are common to all. He searches, because he feels obliged to search, for the fundamentals of human interest. I have agreed with myself upon five of these."

"Now *that*," cried Brant, "really interests me. I wish you'd be specific as to what they are."

"I have an opinion—by compulsion. I couldn't go on without it. I call the first fundamental, Sex. No, I don't mean by the narrow definition. I could have said Love, which also can be pinched to a narrow definition. I want the widest term, the big one, biologically big, that will cover the whole problem of man and woman, motherhood as well as romance, the baby as well as ball dresses. If I said that I put this subject first because nature did, you would not quarrel

with me. At all events, it is biologically first. The fact that it is abused as a subject, that it so frequently obsesses grotesquely, that it is made the excuse for the morbid or the merely rebellious or the stalely sentimental, cannot alter the matter.

"Second, I put Money. I have found no kind of person that is not interested in money as a fount of all blessings, as a root of all evil, as the implement of greed, as the irritant in conflict, as the supreme sophistry of civilization—as any other thing you may wish to call it. As worth less than something else, or more than something else, as intrusive or elusive or *ill*usive—there it is in the foreground, never to be ignored—Money.

"Third, the Body—the shell we live in. Sometimes I feel like saying simply, Stomachs. Once life was all stomach—a kind of propagating stomach. It long afterward acquired limbs, eyes, and a brain. There are people who give the effect of trying to revert—to be again simply a vast stomach. Something to eat! Magical suggestion! Something to drink shoulders in with a colossal swagger as if to belittle all other considerations. Any aspirant can get more attention for the subject of drink than for the subject of education.

"As for that, something to drink *is* fundamental. If a man who takes the wrong educa-

tion is badly hurt, so is the man who takes the wrong drink. Among wrong things, hurting the body is a *beginning* consideration. First importance may not be greatest importance. A man's soul may be more important than his body, but his body is a first subject. This may excuse him somewhat for thinking so much about it. He doesn't get very far in *knowing* about it. A body story is a mystery story. After thousands of years of guessing and experimentation it remains infinitely enigmatic. The average man doesn't know where his liver is. Watch where he puts his hand when he says his liver hurts him. As a result, anything about the body that can seem to be a revelation is likely to elicit attention.

"I say 'seem.' Maybe we ought to admit that to reach human interest, revelation must not only *be* revelation, but must *appear* to be—it must *look* its interest. But that is an art consideration, and we need not go too deeply into that. It is good ethics to use the parable to hold attention, to appeal to the imagination. If the editor of a 'magazine section' could make people read about the proper care of babies by printing a picture of the heaviest year-old baby in the world, he would be inclined to do it. If he prints a picture of a Murillo it may get but a glance. If he says the picture was found in an attic and sold for

a quarter of a million, he can seem to hear: 'Great Jupiter! There's an old painting in my aunt's attic in Pomfret, Connecticut! Just suppose . . . !' Thus he gets much more than a glance for Murillo, who is (alas!) not a fundamental, by way of the fundamental of money. This is shocking, of course. The editor wishes all readers were respectful to great art. Yet making them see, incidentally, not only Murillo, but the fact that great art *endures* while so many other things wither, is a function not without its practical side.

"The editor might be accused of trickery in trying to get people to learn things about their own bodies, for instance. He would plead guilty. He justifies himself for studying ways to get people to read. Of course I am speaking now of the staple elements of a newspaper outside of news. Here the editor's problem is not simply to find things readers will like *after they have read them*, but *ways to get them to read.* Attention is an imperative of entertainment as well as of education. It is the first imperative of salesmanship also. Different ways of attracting attention are made necessary not so much by different kinds of people as by different kinds of *situation.* A newspaper is a noisy *place.* . . .

"But that is a big subject in itself. Let us get back to fundamentals of interest.

"A fourth fundamental may be expressed as the Crisis of One. It may be the one in conflict with the many, as in a detective story, or the one in conflict with nature, as in a desert-island solitude. Anything that isolates the individual to the danger point has a universal appeal to the imagination. In the presence of a danger, every other individual struggles with the victim to escape. In the case of a culprit, one sort of person wants him to be caught. Another sort wants him to get away. Each of us instinctively puts himself in his place, for a time, at least, no matter how wicked he may be, no matter whether the moral sense steps in afterward and says, 'He must be caught.'

"Notice here that the reader is always like the politician. He says (or feels) intuitively, 'Where do *I* come in?' Human interest goes by the privilege of *inhabiting* the situation presented. We intuitively say: 'What would *I* do with a million?' 'What would *I* have done in the open boat if . . . ?' and so on. As for history, it repeats again and again the drama of The-One-in-Conflict-with-the-Many. Sometimes the one is a culprit. Sometimes he is a genius. And each of us is a little world. To be Myself. And to be a Member. The eternal conflict is wrapped up in that.

"There are stories that might be cited to indicate how frequently all the fundamentals

may be voiced in one drama, and that suggest, too, how some forces that may be strong as personal feelings may have little fascination as something to watch. Jealousy, to take one instance, can be much mightier as an emotion than as a dramatic objective. A story like *The Count of Monte Cristo* touches the fundamentals in a way that is sure of popular appeal. The four fundamentals I have mentioned are all here—love, dazzling treasure, the bodily ordeal, and a terrific conflict in isolation.

"The individual looks eagerly or reluctantly, but inevitably, into the fifth fundamental—the Hereafter—the Great Outside. A sense of this fundamental is in the back of every mind, whether the mind knows it or not. The mind may think it has turned away from religion—it may, in fact, seem to have no religious sense at all. But touched in the right way by a question as to what comes After, every mind must hear the knocking. An elemental awe awaits the supreme suggestion. The most violent outcry of repudiation never can conceal this supreme curiosity. Indifference toward art may be honest. The social sense may be undeveloped or blunted. Indifference about the hereafter, about all that lies outside of our senses, beyond the horizon of earthly traffic, is unthinkable. Anything that may look like indifference is a pretense. Every sane man and

woman on earth would give attention to the first absolutely authenticated ghost. It would be hard to think of a kind of man or woman who wouldn't be interested to hear of a single substantiated sign that what we call the soul has a continuity.

"We reach in this what may be a high sentiment. Sentiment is as elemental as hunger—it *is* a hunger. The greatest salesman I ever knew told me that in any situation his *first* consideration was sentiment. Some people try to make a world without it. It can't be done. It's easy to overlook it. I know poets who seem to have no sentiment at all. And I know business men who are saturated with it. You never can tell where or how you may find it. Of course, sentimentalism is sentiment without humor. We can't ignore real sentiment. Carry a little of it with you when you go out to find what 'they' really want. It will help you to be patient if you are annoyed to discover how the 'great average' holds fast to primary things.

"We may discover that some very important things are not quite primary. To reach attention for these it may be necessary to *relate them to primary things.* And we should give a thought to how it might be if the really 'popular' tendency were the other way about. The cynic has his laugh about the Mother songs,

for example. 'Hokum,' says the theatrical man. Try to fancy a world in which the average person did not in some degree respond to the mother sentiment. It isn't the mother sentiment that is mawkish; it is the make-believe, the sop thrown to that sentiment, that excites ridicule. It is the mountebank, pretending to reflect popular emotions, and shamelessly parading his hokum counterfeit, who so often makes 'what they want' seem absurd, if not vicious."

"But doesn't what they want get on your nerves?" demanded Brant. "Doesn't a sense of the willingness to accept mush, if not to ask for it, tire you after a while? Don't you get furious about their liking the same sort of thing?"

"Who doesn't? But I'm obliged to admit that liking the fundamentals isn't liking the same sort of thing. Everybody likes some sort of newness, even when set against newness as an abstraction. Successful newness is a *way* of reaching the fundamental. That is where the artist comes in."

"Good Heavens! You don't call it art, do you—? Excuse me, old man. I don't mean—"

"Of course you don't. And you're confusing (quite in the *cognoscenti* manner) art and its possible functions. If art in itself has no ethics, neither has it any discriminations, and for the

same reason. It is not a priest and it is not an aristocrat. The artist may have the spirit of either of these, and he may not. Art is a wand or a weapon. It shines impartially in a sacristy or in a slum. The art of a speech from a cart tail is different from the art of a speech in a parlor. Whether it is a higher or lower art depends not on the place or the subject or the audience, but upon the artist. Whether it is swaying a mob or a Senate, it is art. To use art to sway or to answer a large audience will always seem an inferior trick to the man who measures art by the number of people who can't understand it, whereas the real measure is expressed, and always must be expressed, by the size of the artist. Many great artists have been indifferent to audience or to response. But this does not establish indifference to audience or response as a true measure. On the other hand, many great artists have been exquisitely sensitive to response, and this does not dignify the other practice of forgetting everything but the audience.

"One who has been translating in the great amphitheater is privileged also to sit in his own library with the cronies who are willing to listen to him in the original. Though he may be more personal before the small audience, this need not mean, despite the usual assumption, that he will be more honest. The big

audience calls out the best of some men, the worst of some others. A man who is instinctively dishonest will be dishonest where he has the most encouragement. There have been plenty of famous uplifters who personally preferred beer and smutty stories. On the other hand, I have known men who were artificial and inferior in a crony company who in the amphitheater not only blazed splendidly, but plainly reached their fullest and finest personal expression. Naturally, then, a writer's individual feeling about audience, however conscious or automatic the influence may be, is a determining factor, in any given case, as to the coloring of his output. The men we call artists' artists are certain not to be big-audience men, even if the *degree* of art may be as definite in one case as in the other. Confusion of kinds of art and degrees of art has led to endless wrangling.

"Every artist has before him a trilogy of considerations—himself, the audience, and the art. He may be benevolent or selfish in considering only himself. He may be benevolent or selfish in considering only the audience. When he considers only the art he is like a miser with his money, a theologian who sees only the altar cloths, or a fanatical Efficiency Man with his Schedule—he has forgotten what it is all about. Art ought to mean, to the artist

working as an individual, the expression of himself to others. He may accomplish this expression by forgetting himself for the moment, or by forgetting others for the moment. When his skill comes he may be able to accomplish it by forgetting art for the moment. No matter which he is able or willing or desirous of forgetting in his work, he cannot think of the objective product as potential without thinking of it as something to be seen or heard or read. There is no other reason for making it objective. There is no reason why a poet should *write* poetry save to communicate himself. The poet's feeling may be more important than his thought. His thought may be more important than the particular expedients of expression. Yet the expression is a prime necessity in communication, and since we have agreed to call a poet a person who not only holds, but who *brings* beauty, a poet who really despises audiences is unthinkable.

"Naturally, the choice of the large audience is more often influenced by pressure than by impulse. Small-audience people are racking their hearts to face the large audiences, sometimes, it may be, because they want the large-audience thrill, but mostly because they need the large-audience rewards. There are those who are naturally large-audience people who aspire to the small-audience honors. These

sometimes present a pitiful spectacle, but we can't decently rebuke the aspiration when it is real. To those who may recklessly aspire to a double life—"

"I see!" said Brant—"who would live by the large audience and get their joy from the small one."

"Perhaps that way—precisely as with other people in the world. Yet it can be the other way about. And there can be the lucky ones who get a joy from both. After all, Brant, the people in the audiences are all *folks*. The trouble with the large audience isn't its size, the strong infusion of difficult elements, or the drunken sort of thrill some people get from it—"

"Of course not!" exclaimed Brant. "It's just the everlasting need for the hokum."

"And to add to the confusion there can be an artistry in hokum. All the same, how do we know that there shall not arise some day a great artist, a greater than any we have known, who will love the audience of All-of-Us and who shall put over on that audience a really great art—as great as the artistry in the sky or in a Niagara—without the progressive stages, without having to be dead a thousand years, without having to be studied or indicated or suppressed or in any way martyred to get through."

"The great audience of All-of-Us will have changed a great deal before that can happen," growled Brant. Then he swung about to ask; "You're not *satisfied* with The Public, are you?"

"Being satisfied with the public would be equivalent to being satisfied with humanity. I share the common dissatisfaction with humanity. But I'm most dissatisfied with it when it isn't human. The situation is quite as distressing as that described by those who lament that living with Americans doesn't sufficiently Americanize. Haven't you noticed how many people live with humanity without being humanized? It's quite amazing.

"My five fundamentals simply assume that most of humanity is likely to continue to be human for quite a while. Ignoring humanness is a lonesome job. Trying to change humanness is a prodigious bore. Putting heart's blood into something and grieving because humanness doesn't seem to like it—well, you know the depth of that tragedy."

Both Brant and I were silent for a little space.

Presently Brant said: "Of course, you're an individualist whistling in a public darkness to keep up your courage. I once heard of a prostitute who wrote a beautiful prose-poem on chastity."

"Why not?" I retorted. "Perhaps only a prostitute would be equipped to appraise chastity. Perhaps only the artist who had bruised his soul trying to please the arena could truly know what was in himself, what he really wanted to say, and to whom, among the many, he really wanted to say it. If the arena made him bigger he would create bigger things. If the arena killed the flower of his faith in himself—"

"Go on," demanded Brant.

"—then he would know, when it was too late, that while the arena might have been good for him as a man, he never should have gone there with his art. But mark you: he would be a fool to believe that the arena does this sort of thing to the artist alone. You and I may think it grievous that the artist should be hurt, but it would be a pity to overlook the grievousness of anybody's hurt. The supreme art, the art to which all other arts are subsidiary—in fact, all the others actually find their strength in it—is the art of *living*. When the artist in living is battered by the crowd he too may crawl to his lonesome closet with astonishment or anger or despair in his heart."

Brant's resentment leaped like a flame. "After facing the need to give them what they want—after his ordeal with 'human interest'?"

"Yes. After facing the humanity that *is*.

Fortunately he doesn't always mope, or fail to 'come back.' There is a factor, in singing or in selling, that is larger than trade or technic. It is personal power—call it charm, if you like, or magnetism. Either as artist or as citizen we have good reason to watch for that. We may weep that there should be so little of it about, or grin at the notion that it can be bought in a correspondence course, but we must see that personal power can't exist in a contemptuous aloofness. To hate the world is to have been defeated by it, and personal power doesn't take the count. So far as writers are concerned, you and I know that when insight, sympathy, and enthusiasm are fused in the forceful word the world generally listens—even in noisy places like a newspaper. When we are *interested* in life, life seems to find it out. Human interest awakens most quickly to human interest."

"I see," said Brant. "The way to beat life is to like it. Suggests lifting yourself by your bootstraps."

"We all *do* like life somewhat, even while we are gnashing our teeth. We are not all rapturous, or even cordial, about it. Some of us prefer to be openly insulting to it. But if life didn't like itself there wouldn't be any life. The rage of the rejected lover centers in the fact that he wants the girl. Our fury about

humanity centers in the fact that we want humanity. Inevitably. We are born that way. And we each want humanity to love us for ourself alone. Generally it doesn't. It's a bitter courtship."

"Sophist!" snorted Brant.

ARTIST AND AUDIENCE

ARTIST AND AUDIENCE

ON a later occasion Brant came back to that subject of the audience.

"And I wish," he said, "that you would forget, if you can, the editor side of yourself. An editor is just naturally a compromiser."

"Yet you're asking me to compromise now—asking me to forget something. Isn't it a worse compromise to forget something—in this case, the All-of-Us—than to look honestly at the plain foreground obstacles that must be skirted on the road to an ideal? Perhaps the best compromise is like that—an enforced detour to a destination."

"Staring at foreground obstacles is precisely the way to miss ideals," declared Brant. "There is too much of that. How many people are thinking of anything else but foreground obstacles? Isn't the muddle of the world a situation created by foreground puttering in a stupid blindness as to horizons? Where would Art have been if it had moped over the encroaching clutter of obstacles? Art has nothing to do with obstacles. It has never done

anything great except by ignoring them altogether. It thinks straight through them. It dissolves obstacles."

"Not obstacle-people," I protested. "I wish it could be more potent in changing people."

"It has changed them mightily—but not by trying to do that. It has changed them by being true to itself—simply by being true. That is its one obligation, to be true."

"True to life?"

"True to truth; the truth dreamed by the artist. The artist who thinks of anything beyond that is not being true. If he thinks of effects, if he has preachy purposes, he is done for. Absolutely."

"We sha'n't quarrel about devotion to truth. But we can't communicate truth without having intentions. An accidental splash of color might look like art, but it would not be art unless it was intended. When art accepts accident, as it so often does, it adds the intention by its acceptance. A temple without intention would be meaningless foolery. There would be no real architecture in a house that couldn't be lived in. Art must have its idea, if only the idea that blue is rather a wonderful color. Art is quite privileged to be beautifully nonsensical, because we can inhabit beautiful nonsense with great joy. Apparently there is a lot of beautiful nonsense in nature. It is a

great puzzle to humorless people, to fanatics and prigs.

"If Art must have its idea or its emotion, it is bound to have its audience-consciousness because it is bound to choose terms to reach any audience. The sculptor wants to know, before he begins, from which point his statue is to be *seen*. The Sistine Chapel had its spectator considerations. To a singer the size of the hall will affect the technic. The speaker who prepares himself likes to know whether he is to talk from the tail of a cart or from the corner of a drawing-room. The writer may ignore the audience consideration, but *kind* of reader and *place* of reader are factors just the same. It is not true that the writer is the only artist who can ignore the mechanics of contact. The fact that he may do so simply proves that his audience so often has to find him, search him out. He survives among those who do find him. If his chosen audience is slow in finding him, or doesn't find him at all, he isn't proved to have been wrong."

"Then what good does it do him to think of an audience?"

"Choosing an audience, even in the case of choosing a medium of publication, will be disappointing in proportion to the chooser's expectations. I should say that too definite an expectation would be a ball and chain. I've

implied, I think, that any expectation, any *working* consciousness, would be fatal to some artists. My only insistence is that if a philosophy is implicit in all writing an audience of some sort is implicit in all writing, just as the retina is implicit in the idea of color. The meaning of a word is determined not by its ancestry or previous condition of servitude, but by the reaction it sets up. That consideration directly affects the choice of the word. The beauty of a color is not in the chemical elements, but in the effect. A beautiful word is a word that carries a beautiful suggestion."

"I don't object," said Brant, "to the image of a kind of reader in the writer's mind. Maybe that may keep him going. If it kindled the artist in him, all right. If it made him want to put over something that didn't belong to his art, all wrong. If it perverted him into a propagandist he would cease being an artist."

"In my opinion, Brant, every critic who takes that view relates the degree of art to the degree of irresponsibleness, as if the kind of idea not only affected the kind of art, but the degree of art. Of course a very beautiful art may and often has been used to carry a damnfoolish idea, and a tremendous idea may be put forward with very clumsy and inadequate art. The sooner we realize that art, like any

other instrument, may be used by angel or devil or plain fool, the sooner we will learn to disentangle the superficially æsthetic and *communicatory* forcefulness from beauty or force of idea. The word Art itself is quite inadequate. It is used loosely to describe a thing that is made up of style (the *voice* of the artist), technic, subject, intention. When writers and critics occasionally give the effect of chasing themselves in circles, forgetting what it is all about, we have some reason to blame that absurd word Art, which, taken closely, means only the expression, but which is constantly employed to mark the personality of the artist, his subject, his intentions, and his recognitions as to the audience. The frequent implication is that art is a kind of expression of which the critic approves, addressed to the sort of people which the critic regards as fit to be addressed. If it is addressed to any other sort, though by the same man and with the same beauty of medium, it is not art. Thus, if you believe in the ideas, the thing is art. If you don't believe in the ideas the thing is propaganda. The fact that open tracts have passed into literature seems to carry no hint. The propaganda of to-day may be the literature of to-morrow. Also it may not. The point is that the propaganda element—the element of the thing *said*, the recognizing-an-audience element—does not

affect the degree of art at all. Dante, Goethe, Voltaire, Rousseau, Milton, Swift, Dickens, Ibsen, Whitman, all wrote a lot of propaganda, a fact noted with violent resentment in their own time, and the art verdict of to-day forgets the propaganda if great art is there, just as the world has been willing to forget the art if powerful propaganda was there. The artist's *influence* fixes the recognition, that is to say, the effect on the audience—the audience of his time or the final audience."

"But, my dear boy, there is a big difference between using an art and being an artist. And there is a big difference between the situation of an artist using propaganda and that of an artist sticking to art."

"A great difference. Sometimes the æsthetics of ethics and the ethics of æsthetics look to be a long way apart. The most important fact is the protagonist. The thing he wants to do must be accepted from him. If he does it with real beauty it is art. If he thinks about the beauty rather than about the thing he is *doing*, if he builds a carriage in which nothing rides, we are likely to catch him at it. If he feels like being nonsensical he has only to be spontaneously and beautifully so to win the gratitude of all who are bored by the droning of an argumentative world. If he can please himself by pleasing the 'precious,' he talks

about nuances. If he wants to please the literary shop crowd he will wear new words and find new ways of insulting the equator. And so on. Art addressed to other artists is, naturally, most likely to be audience-conscious. Too often criticism is acutely audience-conscious. And it has a very good excuse, because it is talking about art consciousness and art effects. The critic searches in books, as Mr. Wells searched in American life, for 'a common ordered intention,' and the outside reader, without special gifts of analysis, often finds, as Mr. Wells found in Boston, 'a terrifying unanimity of æsthetic discriminations.'

"We have no quarrel as to the fact that art may be used to express a wholly detached emotion of beauty. It may be used to be wholly personal, and it may be used to be wholly impersonal. It may be used to preach a Sermon on the Mount or a Gettysburg Address, or it may be used to express, in terms of astounding loveliness, a maniacal contempt for God and man. When Emerson said that there was no object so foul that intense light would not make it beautiful, he was expressing the power of art to be beautiful in itself. The white light of art may make a foul man or a foul subject beautiful. But since art may attempt to get along without conscious purpose, yet can't get along without subject, the foulness is

bound to become an issue when the art acquires an audience, because if it is good art the audience will see straight through to the subject, if not straight through to the artist."

"Are you pretending to believe in self-consciousness?"

"On the contrary, I'm seeking to pillory a pretense, chiefly, of course, because I believe an artist is helped as much as other men are helped by being honest; because I believe that every gesture contemptuous toward reactions is a wasted gesture. Great art is never peevish. It may be revolutionary, but it never is merely rebellious. It may heave up like a mountain and smash things, but it doesn't make faces at the landscape. Constantly thinking about art more definitely involves self-consciousness than constantly thinking about the audience. No real passion for art could be felt by a man whose passions had been fed by art alone. Bob Ingersoll said about a real dollar that it doesn't have to be redeemed, because it is the redeemer. The thing the artist expresses is not art, it is life—life in the artist or in the universe outside of the artist.

"The artist, 'sitting on the curbstone of the world,' hears something in himself, sees something beyond. He says, 'I will say it!' It would be a mere drunkenness to say it in the dark to no one at all. He is not less an artist—

he is *completely* the artist—when he finds some one to say it to. It might give him a whimsical joy to say it to a lunkhead who wouldn't know what he was talking about. To wish to say it to some one who will know what he is talking about cannot belittle him. The truth is, of course, that he could have no terms even for whimsicality save by practice in assuming a recipient. Passions imply response.

"You see, Brant, I'm summing up—"

"I think you're slipping out from under," growled Brant.

"I'm summing up. If passion implies response; if communication implies audience; if inference sometimes surpasses implication—if the audience sometimes carries away from a work of art more than the artist carried to it, giving him credit, as it should, for the sum of the reactions—then who shall deny to the artist the right of direct address? There may be a kind of thing he can do only in a state of trance, but why insist that he shall do all of his work that way? Ever watch a man or woman—even one intuitionally quiet—light up in a conversation? Ever watch them become incandescent? The illumination may be beautiful or it may be disastrous, but it was evoked by response—by contact. The greatest written art, in my opinion, will always be wrought by those who have so fully contacted life as to feel

the audience without being conscious of it; who realize that it is more deeply indispensable to make the audience forget the expedient than to forget it themselves; who, as between the necessary solitude and the necessary contact by which vision is fed, will, as Emerson had it, keep 'the head in one, the hands in the other.' I have no more belief in an autocracy of expression than in an autocracy of government. For the same reason that I dislike government for its own sake or church for its own sake, I dislike a notion of art that puts it aside from life, that by releasing it from a participating responsibility fortifies the brutal indifference of the stupid, the shut-minded, and the whole brood of social quacks. The prodigious sophistry that great art *gets through* has done a lot of harm. One might as well say that all *great deeds* get through. Most of the greatest deeds must, in the nature of things, never be heard of. To say that a work of art lives is to say that it came to recognition and that it continues to be recognized. If it lives by response surely it may be born in participation."

"Evidently," said Brant, with a sad grimace, "you're dismissing the poor chaps who've tried 'addressing' the world and couldn't get a blink of response. Can you imagine a kind of artist who wouldn't paint or write for a

whole world if he didn't hear, 'We have no call for it'?"

"I can imagine an artist who is able to forget what the world needs. But at the moment I'm not thinking so much of him as of those creeds implying that artists are released from the obligation to remember. And I am taking into account the fact that all men suffer in the same degree from the inertia or indifference of masses. The artist's lonesome devotion is not unique, and neither is his suffering. He cannot cheer nor lead nor creatively beautify life, nor even, in the closest sense, creatively express himself while he thinks of himself in terms either of an exasperated martyrdom or of a peculiarly privileged aloofness. I can think of him as withdrawn to find himself; as piercingly alone on the mountain, to see and to feel; I may choose to think of him as a kind of god. But much patience goes with being a god. One can fancy an angry god, but not an exasperated one; above all, not a contemptuous one. My literary gods, carrying human chains, often blaze with tempers. Yet the thing that shines at the last, through every obscuration, is a fundamental sympathy for that poor devil, Man, who so seldom knows what he wants, who never knows what he needs, whose appetites so often ignore his hungers, who shuffles off at the end without having suspected that

his deepest hunger was for beauty, and that ministers of beauty awaited only his word."

"I suppose," said Brant, looking into his disgraceful pipe, "that all optimism must have its working medium of sophistry; and every man who doesn't commit suicide must be some sort of an optimist. But I don't see the artist as you do. I see him safe only when I see him aloof. I see him sure only when he can forget the clamor of the crowd. If I think of him as a god I am the more certain that he will not consent to be told what he shall do, knowing, as he must, that what he does do will be best for the rest of them, and best for the rest of them only when he creates out of god-stuff, not by the 'call' that comes at sales counters, but by the call within him."

"Brant," I said, "we are becoming rhapsodical in our divergences. We disagree because we are talking about art, which is itself opinion in solution. Perhaps we may be consoled by history. The artist of the pen once had to make his peace with a prince—"

"As between a patron and a public," cried Brant, "I believe art fared better with the ancient angel."

"There was much to be said for the concentrated truckling. Yet we may overestimate its consolations. How the artist must have hated the creature to whom he wrote that gorgeously

subservient dedication! There are more readers now—"

"Such as they are—"

"—and why shouldn't the better democracy cheer us a bit? Why isn't there a splendor in the greater challenge? A larger proportion of people are influenced by art than ever before were influenced by it. Few people understand art, as such, but asking that they should is a good deal of a presumption. So long as life remains a mystery art may well be cryptic to the general. What we call indifference to art is often simply a taking for granted. A taking for granted hurts, and if it is a tribute it is an acrid tribute, but it may be that it is what art had to reach in preparation for its biggest work. We now take the Grand Cañon for granted. Only a multiplied and highly supplemented Grand Cañon in Mars or somewhere else could astonish us. Art's biggest work may be done when it drops its capital and not only chucks all brahminical bombast but every vestige of sectarian pretense. I don't know. Just now it seems to need the robes of its religion to keep warm. For any purpose of prophecy we are disqualified by closeness and by pressure of the day's work of art itself. In our order of living, groups of men are glib in wishing that all creeds might be blended save their own. Yet meanwhile, though art may be ignored, it

can't ignore. For better or worse its treasure is in the keeping of humanity; its life is a giving."

Brant interposed, soberly: "I see *your* artist as patiently eager—and meek—wincing in an east wind. I must confess to you that he's not an inspiring figure."

"The great participating figures have not escaped the mire. There was a day when I saw the artist as a kind of Christ . . . invisible to most eyes, striding in the muck of the world. Yes, I saw the nails, too. . . . At other times the figure (by the persistent foolishness of personification) has been that of a bacchante. There are a good many reasons why we should regard the figure as feminine, though this would offend the inventors of virility. Until some woman looms beside a Buonarroti or a Rodin, beside a Dante or a Shakespeare, her figure will probably seem inconclusive. The fripperies of the symbolism do not matter. Life matters a great deal. We shall quarrel about the way it is to be done, but art must somehow serve life."

"As truth does," said Brant.

Yet we sat surrounded by symbols; and in my eyrie the mere noises of life, fumes of sound, rising . . . rising and drifting . . . were all of which we could be agreed.

MIXING

MIXING

THE anchorite is, perhaps, not wholly obsolete. It may be that he survives differently. We might doubt whether a Simeon Stylites could long maintain any effect of being aloof in a modern world. Invention has favored curiosity, and withdrawal begins to imply a sturdier resolution and more of ingenuity than it once implied. Moreover, a newer ethics stresses urgently, and sometimes insultingly, the special virtue of mingling. Large rewards are promised to the good "mixer."

The phrase "glad-hand artist" may be intended to mark an emphasis of technic on the part of the practitioner, yet it does not specifically accuse the rituals of civility nor put any slur on the general righteousness of mixing. Few excesses can be so irritating as an excess of cordiality, and few expressions are under so imperative a need to conceal their art as that art which undertakes to reconcile human contacts. Envy, too, will play its part. It will be quick to catch the exaggeration; it

will be suspicious of motive, and above all alertly critical of ineptness and intrusion. There is always room for the pusher. All decency rises in resentment of the wrong way and the wrong time, and of the bounder insensibility that spoils so many moments. But the basic morality of mixing is maintained with an American insistence. It is made clear beyond debate that mixing pays.

Systems of etiquette, plausible and portable, are profusely sold in recognition of a need for facility in formulas of introduction and greeting. Memory systems thrive on an eloquently described terror resulting from forgetting names. To be able to say, with a spontaneous readiness, because you have filled your head with an alarm-clock machinery of identification, "Mr. Watson, meet my friend Mr. Pinkley of Peoria," is held up as an ideal indispensable to every young man who wishes to get on. There is so much to be said for the ability to recall that Mr. Watson *is* Mr. Watson, as well as for the supplementary miracle of being sure that your friend from Peoria is Pinkley, that the device assuring so happy a consummation has much to justify its sheer weight. Remembering faces and qualities is no substitute. One can't introduce by a face. The name is necessary, and if it is necessary even a cumbersome implement for seizing it

may have more than a debatable utility. Politics and business both imply the name gift. "He met me once in Minneapolis eighteen years ago," we are told of a politician, "and here to-day he was out with, 'How are you, Mr. Marsh?', on the instant." Equally marvelous agilities are related of the geniuses of business. Whether it is by virtue of a gift or a purchase, a name-gathering facility is proved to be profitable. We may stand appalled before the requirements. We may be able to fancy the machinery or the effort, and conclude that if we could remember all the names we couldn't remember anything else, but the immense convenience of the names stands forth as indisputably comfortable.

Aside from any such matters of detail, reasonable mixing can scarcely be questioned as a civilized habit. Many a recluse has extolled the practice. It would be late in the day to urge mingling as a means of understanding, a means not to be matched for its peculiar enlightenments by any substitute process. But when this that is obvious is accompanied by the implication that personal mingling is the only means of understanding, when we see an ideal of individual development predicated wholly on such mixing, when we encounter a glad-hand culture complacent in its surface wisdom and its cheerful willing-

ness not to know anything but vocalized life, this term mixer may well give us a turn.

We may be reminded, for example, that it is possible to meet more minds than can come with a touch of the hand, and that physical association, in the present ordering of life, is but a minority influence in the possible development of character. Those who "mix" most widely and effectively are those who also read.

Naturally the "practical" specialist in mixing forgets books. On sudden challenge he would indicate the reader as representing quite the opposite sort of thing. "His head in a book"—thus the father or mother who wants the boy to get out and meet people. That the book could represent a veritable meeting would be in many circumstances a notion of astounding novelty. As in meetings with people, meetings in books have their grades of significance, but the influential reality of the contact is a truth that needs, perhaps, only some convincing emphasis to lift a little of the opprobrium from reading. The parent wise enough to wish that a youngster might meet decent persons would be likely to wish for an equivalent good fortune in books, but the same wisdom, pardoning something to the spirit of youth in the choice of companions, should not ask youth to meet in books personalities and

ideas too formidable for its years. In any case, what children should read, quite beyond the matter of approval (biography is rich in evidences of the futilities of disapproval), is a question that confesses the hazards of influence, and since influence is admitted, it is amazing that the parallel should so seldom be recognized, and book-mixing receive consideration for the practical bearings of its influence.

We are accustomed to suggest that many a book, resting between elbows on an attic floor, has shaped a life, or even a nation. We are able without contradiction to show how books have established religions and precipitated revolutions. That Bolshevism began in a book is the sort of fact that is capable, in certain quarters, of increasing skepticism as to the vaunted benefits of reading. Yet with whatever reactions, books do come in for recognition after the event. Even an utterly practical mind will, for example, acknowledge that the boy Lincoln's mixing with books had very important results. So long as we speak in terms of history, or of biographic revelation, book power will not be denied; in fact, sentimentalism likes to dwell upon the idea, though it prefers, for strictly dramatic reasons, that the book shall be the *Lives of the Saints* or at least *Pilgrim's Progress*, unless the subject person has at last been elected sheriff or

has arrived securely in the steel business, in which event one of those rhapsodies about Napoleon fits rather well.

A present boy is another affair. A present boy is not to be depended upon for an enthusiasm about Christian martyrs or any of those themes so impressively mentioned in biography as having instigated the careers of the successful. In all probability he shows a disposition in favor of Nick Carter. He is bitterly accused of having no taste for books that would improve him, and of preferring the movies to any books whatever. And when he becomes a man it is expected he will declare on his own account that he has no time to read.

Having no time to read is seldom stated as a dilemma. It is supposed to express a busyness in more practical fields. A corking story about "success" is all very well. Something with zip in it. But a whole evening for some dry thing—who has time for that with so much "mixing" to do? These bookish people unfit themselves for the rough and tumble of business.

That book reading should be left so largely to women is mentioned as indicating not that women have more intelligence, but that they have more time. If a better culture is deduced from a better reading, most men are adept at relinquishing the honors on the ready theory

that they have no time for culture; moreover, culture is ever under the suspicion of being a ladylike sort of thing that doesn't get you anywhere.

The theory of not having time has one important bearing—it relieves men of the obligation to read the talked-about book and avoids the stigma that rests so heavily upon those who have the time and fail. Many people live in a vast fear of being caught in a haven't-read-it minority, and of the parallel misery of reading something that no one ever speaks of. In defensive reading only the noisy is necessary. Defensive travel carries the same compulsion. You see only the things upon which you will be cross-examined by those who have also traveled defensively. Thus one sort of mixing forbids reading and another sort enforces it; both see obligation and neither sees privilege. Book reading as a privilege, as an enlarger of life, as a mental mixing that has vital and extraordinary possibilities, is left to the discovery and enjoyment of minds with an unbruised initiative. The young are likely to own this initiative. As a birthright it is always in peril, not only from false teaching or false example, but from contemptuous pressure. In the matter of book reading, most men seem to live on the interest of an early investment. No rhap-

sodic mood should lead the champion of literature to overlook the strain upon the world's workers or dismiss too quickly the question of an easy choice in the brief period of possible recreation permitted by the average American's business habits. Yet it is the driven worker in particular who has most to get from the right book. American business may be a fast game, but it is no more exhausting than the labor of those who in a day of vastly longer labor nourished their minds by the light of a candle. Books that have shaped lives still live, and are still being written by and about the great of the earth.

If one were writing an "inspirational" message it might be pardonable to say to young or old: "When you mix, mix with all sorts and conditions, for the good of your soul. But don't omit the big ones. The world's greatest are worth meeting. Your chances of meeting them in the flesh may not be good. And if you do meet them you may get only a fragment of their attention, a mere hint of what lies in them. Yet the great men you are free to meet in books give you their best. You may choose your time. You may meet them without embarrassment. You may listen without hurry. You may leave them and come back. You will know that you have had access to the greatest forces of all time and that you

are the better fitted to measure other forces, to understand to-day by a better knowledge of yesterday, to profit by the ordinary contacts of your own life, to be yourself more of a force in the world, to enjoy more your most persistent companion—yourself. And you will be able to call yourself a real mixer."

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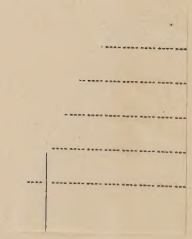

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